The Last Attempt

by

BIRGER DAHLERUS

Introduction by
The Rt. Hon.
SIR NORMAN BIRKETT, P.C.

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INTRODUCTION

By The Rt. Hon. Sir Norman Birkett, p.c.

I hope that this book written by Mr. Birger Dahlerus will be widely read. It is enthrallingly interesting as a mere narrative. But its interest is a secondary thing compared with the valuable light the narrative throws on the critical days immediately preceding the German oppression against Poland in September of 1939. Here is enacted a little drama, complete in itself, where human motive can be studied from the facts so faithfully and carefully set out.

Mr. Dahlerus reveals himself in these pages, not only as a lover of his own country of Sweden and as a lover of England, but as one who was actuated by the highest motives in making what he believed to be, at the time, a last attempt to save Europe and the world from all the horrors of war.

My own interest was first awakened by seeing Mr. Dahlerus in the witness-box giving evidence on oath before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg on the 19th March, 1946. He then related the principal facts in this book in the presence of Goering, Ribbentrop and their co-defendants. Goering had requested the attendance of Mr. Dahlerus, and the Tribunal, in accordance with its usual practice, had granted the request on the ground that the evidence Goering suggested that the witness could give was material on the Count in the Indictment alleging that the Defendants initiated a war of aggression against Poland.

For the case Goering sought to make was that he entered into negotiations with Mr. Dahlerus to try to bring about a peaceful solution of the Polish question and was Not Guilty of initiating aggressive war. The history of those negotiations is the story of this interesting book. But unless the account of the proceedings at Nuremberg are read also, the book will fail to achieve its full purpose; and Part IX of

the "Proceedings" published by H.M. Stationery Office should certainly be consulted. For it becomes clear as the evidence was sifted that the efforts of Goering were not those of the single-minded seeker after Peace, but were rather in conformity with the usual Nazi practice of seeking to isolate the opponent to make the task of destruction easier and more certain.

For example, on 24th August, 1939, Goering asked Mr. Dahlerus to go to London to see if a conference could be arranged between the representatives of the German and the British governments. When this request was made, Mr. Dahlerus did not doubt the good faith of Goering and thought (to use his own words) "that Goering was the member of the German government who was most probably working for peace." Accordingly, he went to and fro between Germany and England, as this book relates, with the patriotic purpose of getting the parties together even at the very last moment, as it seemed, in order to stave off the unspeakable calamity, if humanly possible.

But what Mr. Dahlerus did not know at the time because it was most carefully concealed from him was made known at Nuremberg in the brilliant cross-examination of Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe. Mr. Dahlerus then said that Goering did not tell him that on the 22nd August Hitler had told Goering at Obersalzberg that he had decided in the spring that a conflict with Poland was bound to come. Goering never told him that on the 23rd May Hitler had said to Goering that Danzig was not the subject of dispute at all, but it was a question of expanding German living space in the East, and that Germany's task was to isolate Poland, and that the success of the isolation would be decisive. Goering never told him that at the time he was asking him to go to England he was going to inform M. Lipski, the Polish Ambassador, that the main obstacle to removing the tension between Germany and Poland was the alliance between Poland and Britain.

All this and very much more may be read in the "Proceedings." The final situation was very well summed-up in the

last answer given by Mr. Dahlerus at Nuremberg, and it contained the essence of the whole matter. He then said:

> "At the time I thought I could contribute something to preventing a new war. I could definitely prove that nothing was left undone by the British government to prevent war. But had I known what I know to-day I would have realised that my efforts could not possibly succeed."

Mr. Dahlerus was an honest man, and it was the technique of guile and deceit practised upon him that wrung from him that disillusioned cry.

In dealing with the evidence of Mr. Dahlerus the Judgment of the International Military Tribunal says:

> "Dahlerus, of course, had no knowledge at that time of the decision which Hitler had secretly announced on the 22nd August, nor of the German military directives for the attack on Poland which were already in existence. As he admitted in his evidence, it was not until the 26th September, after the conquest of Poland was virtually complete, that he first realised that Goering's aim all along had been to get Great Britain's consent to the German seizure of Poland."

The book is intensely interesting, too, for the pen pictures of Hitler, Goering, and Ribbentrop at this critical time. In the very early morning of 27th August Hitler made it clear to Mr. Dahlerus for the first time that his terms were that Britain should help Germany to seize Danzig and the Corridor. He thus describes Hitler at that moment:

> "Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the room, and stood there staring. His voice became blurred and his behaviour was that of a completely abnormal person. . . . His voice became more indistinct and finally one could not follow him at all. . . . Just then he seemed more like a phantom from a story book than a real person. I stared at him in amazement and turned to see how Goering reacted, but he did not turn a hair."

It was a terrifying reflection that this man was the man with the fate of the world in his hands at that moment, a

man at the summit of supreme power in Germany, and he exhibited to one beholder all the signs of the complete madman.

It is wholly good that the greatest publicity should be given to the events in Germany leading up to the war. The long and important trial of the major war criminals at Nuremberg has now placed on record for all who care to read it a history "never perhaps surpassed in all the dark annals of crime." And Mr. Dahlerus has written in this book a most valuable account of the vital days with which he was concerned before the terrible scourge was unloosed, which sheds the most revealing light on Nazi methods and Nazi personalities. It is fervently to be hoped that this book will be widely read and the lessons it teaches taken to heart.

PREFACE

THE historic events which took place between the rise to power of National Socialism in 1933 to its fall in 1945 can now be judged in the light of all the revelations and experiences of recent years. In order to understand the notes which I have assembled in this book the reader must try and recall the general situation in the summer of 1939.

As late as autumn, 1939, nearly everybody wanted to try to prevent a world war with all the disastrous consequences which must ensue. In his speech to the House of Commons on 12th October, 1939, Chamberlain referred to the attempts which had been made by President Roosevelt, the Pope and various other influential people.

I have tried to give a clear and truthful description of my experiences during the last few months before the outbreak of the second World War on 3rd September, 1939. Chance enabled me to be present at some of the important negotiations which preceded the declaration of war, and it has been my aim to make as nearly exact a report as possible of what happened, in the hope that these notes may be of some use in compiling an historical report of the events during the last fateful months of peace.

My notes contain an account of my personal experiences only, and therefore give a limited picture of all the important occurrences which followed each other so swiftly during the summer of 1939. Their presentation makes no claim to stylistic pretensions. Life moulds each individual according to his profession, and since my sphere of activity has been confined to the world of commerce, I must be excused if my narrative is dry and businesslike.

BIRGER DAHLERUS

Djursholm, 24th July, 1945.

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Since the Swedish edition of *The Last Attempt* was published in September, 1945, the Nuremberg Trials have disclosed striking facts about the actions by the Nazi government previous to the outbreak of the war. I have, however, considered it self-evident to make no changes or modifications whatsoever in the account of the negotiations that I had an opportunity to follow, as its historical value would lose thereby.

I only wish to add here that since minutes of Hitler's meetings on the 23rd of May, 1939, at Berchtesgaden and on the 22nd August, 1939, have been discovered with his definite declaration that he intended to crush Poland whatever happened, it is obvious that he continued his negotiations with Great Britain and made his declarations regarding his desire for peace solely to mislead not only the German people but the whole world.

BIRGER DAHLERUS

Djursholm, 18th August, 1947.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

LIKE many other Swedish engineers I have spent many years abroad. My travels began while I was still a child, for my parents often went abroad, especially during the summer, and we children accompanied them to Germany, France and other countries. Thus from our earliest youth we learnt to know other peoples and got a glimpse of foreign culture and customs. My father hoped that both his sons would follow the example of former generations and become civil servants, but already as a child my tastes lay in another direction, and when at the age of fourteen I told him that I wanted to take a job in an engineering works in order to see something of industry, he was very much disappointed to think that I should thus go against the family tradition; but from the beginning he did not fail to support my work with the deepest interest. In 1909 I got the opportunity of spending three months' summer holiday as an apprentice in the Wolff Lokomobilenfabrik, in Magdeburg Buchau, and here I got my first insight into the running of a large industrial enterprise, at the same time learning something of the habits and mentality of the workers, thanks to my daily contact with them. In the spring of 1910 I matriculated and then worked for about nine months in J. and C. G. Bolinder's engineering works in Stockholm. In the spring of 1911 I went to England where I got a job in the Sheffield Simplex Motorworks in Sheffield. I lived with a very poor workman's family in Sheffield Road, Tinsley, and during my eight months' stay I learnt to know the English workingmen, during their working and leisure hours. I was filled

with admiration for the great interest which they took in their work, their unfailing loyalty towards the firm which employed them, and the sound principles of conduct which they evinced during our discussions of various problems. I procured a few weeks' leave which I spent bicycling over a great part of England and Scotland, visiting many trade centres and seeing something of conditions there. During this trip I was greatly impressed by the remarkable efforts which were then being made by Lever Brothers at Port Sunlight. They had built up an ideal city where thanks to the resolute support of the leaders the workers had been able to construct their own homes, which gave them a feeling of security and where they maintained a standard of living extremely high in proportion to their earnings.

In the autumn of 1911 I returned home to start my studies at the Stockholm College of Technology, where I passed my civil engineer's examination in the spring of 1914.

During my stay in England the political storm-clouds had already begun to appear on the horizon. At that time everybody was preoccupied by the Agadir affair, and though it involved no military conflict, it was quite obvious that the tension in Europe had not relaxed. As I wanted to be of more use than a mere private in case of war, I underwent a course as reserve officer and on 1st August, 1914, the day of the outbreak of war, I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the reserve of the Svea Lifeguard. I was mobilised and served throughout the late summer and autumn on patrol duty round the Swedish coast.

During the year that followed I again went abroad, so that I had the opportunity of visiting both Germany and England during the first World War. In November 1914 I had been employed by A.B. Separator, and in the following spring I was sent to their branch firm in Germany, Bergedorffer Eisenwerk in Bergedorff, near Hamburg. I remained there for two years and had a clear insight into internal conditions and the difficulties with which the population had to contend during the war. The food situation in Germany was as bad as possible during the winter of

1916–1917, and those who did not live there during that period can scarcely realise how appalling it was.

As time went on, bringing with it increased trials for the people, it strengthened my conviction of the meaninglessness of war.

In the spring of 1917 I returned to Sweden and was employed by Svenska Kullagerfabriken in Gothenburg. At the beginning of the following year I was asked to go to their English branch to organise production at Skefko Ball Bearing Co., in Luton, Bedfordshire, about 30 miles north of London. I went there with 15 engineers and foremen, thereby getting the chance to study the war and its problems from the English point of view; on the whole my impressions were the same as in Germany; the endless suffering to which the population of the warring nations was exposed seemed pointlessly cruel.

In 1919, after a brief stay in Sweden, I was appointed managing director of Skefko Ball Bearing Company, in Luton, and moved with my family to England, where I spent ten interesting years. I learnt to know the English workman as well as the middle class; I also met a number of the upper class and had many opportunities of discussing post-war problems with these varied representatives of the British Empire's social strata. My admiration for the English nation increased as I learnt to know it better. As managing director of Skefko and later of Electrolux Limited, and also as a member of the board of directors of L. M. Ericsson's Telephone Company and several other firms closely connected with Sweden, I was able to compare the production output in their English factories with that of other countries. Undoubtedly the English working-man or employee appears to be less animated than his counterpart in Germany, France or Sweden, but on studying the production output per hour for similar tasks, one can see that the English workman with his calm, determined methods achieves a result equal to that of his foreign comrades. Given the right factory organisation, and an intelligent works management, there is less risk of slow production or strikes in England than in several other places. I also observed that the deep-rooted English public

spirit and sense of justice frequently manifest themselves. Fair play is not merely a cliché, but a reality playing an excessively important part in personal relationships and thereby creating the feeling of mutual confidence which strengthens the union between individuals, and increases efficiency of work.

An Englishman, whatever his social position, is always reserved with foreigners and without being rude is apt to be doubtful of them, but once accepted by an Englishman and on an intimate footing with him, the foreigner knows that he can reckon on his friendship and confidence. Reliability is one of the most characteristic English qualities.

I wish to set down these observations of mine concerning Englishmen and their characteristics, for this opinion acquired during my years in England exerted no mean influence over my part in the negotiations which I am about to describe.

In 1929 I returned to Sweden to build up an enterprise based on Jonas Hesselman's inventions in the field of motor engineering. After many years' work Hesselman had discovered a brilliant solution to the problem of how to drive low pressure combustion engines with oil instead of petrol. This new type of engine was to be introduced into various countries, and I spent much time, therefore, travelling in England, France and Germany. My time was mainly taken up with different tasks connected with my job, but I continued to take an interest in and follow political developments. Owing to my English connections I naturally was much in England, and it was obvious that the policy there concentrated on the prevention of competitive rearmament in the hope of precluding a new world war. This was not confined to the Governmental precautions which were openly announced in the parliamentary debates; in various ways one could see that these efforts were supported by the majority of the English people. Germany had not overcome the effects of her defeat in 1918 and was going through a period of economic crisis and political difficulty. The nation was divided, and the political parties stuck at nothing to get the better of their adversaries and prevent their gaining power. Deep in the

national consciousness lay the thought of revenge, cunningly nursed by conservative circles as well as by the new National Socialist Party. The thirst for revenge lay behind the constant attempts to sabotage the conditions of the Versailles Treaty, above all it influenced the secret rearmament which was carried on throughout these years.

The conflict between the National Socialist Party and the other parties is too well known to need any description here, but the visitor to Germany observed with deep anxiety the methods used by *die Partei* to gain power, and learnt to recognise the public spirit which was their trade-mark. After their assumption of power on 30th January, 1933, the Nazis utilised their extraordinarily cleverly conceived propaganda to convince the entire nation that they were going to rescue Germany from what they called the shame and humiliation into which the Versailles Treaty had plunged the country. During my travels I met many people in prominent positions, who had previously taken a negative attitude towards National Socialism, but who during the development of events during the years subsequent to 1933, had begun to believe that the measures which were now being taken might form the foundations of a new and happy Germany. It was quite clear that National Socialism appealed to an instinct which was common to the entire German people, and which was stimulated by the exceedingly skilful National Socialist propaganda apparatus, which controlled the whole news service in the Third Reich. I felt extremely worried and began to wonder where all this would lead to.

In 1932 I gave up the active management of Hesselman Motor Company A.B., the reason being that together with a partner I had bought J. and C. G. Bolinder's Mekaniska Verkstads A.B. My contact with persons and firms abroad was thereby extended, for in connection with the reorganisation of the firm and the creation of Bolinder's Fabriks A.B., I was obliged to spend much of my time travelling abroad.

CHAPTER II

GOERING

DURING my travels in Germany I had made the acquaintance of Frau Elisabeth Nissen: she lived in Hamburg and had been a widow since 1923. In 1934 we decided to marry, but certain formalities had to be settled. Frau Nissen had a son by her first marriage, born in 1923, and according to German law the Chancery whose ward he was must give its consent to a second marriage, unless part of the capital left by the first husband is settled on the child. Frau Nissen considered that under existing conditions it was not possible to divide up the capital without seriously damaging her own interests and those of her son, especially since she must leave her entire fortune in Germany if she married me. Now a man who was at one time an executor of her husband's will appeared and persuaded the Chancery Judge to put obstacles in the way of my marriage. These intrigues were all the more troublesome, inasmuch as both the one-time executor and the Judge were members of the National Socialist Party and relied on its powerful support.

The treatment to which I was subjected annoyed me considerably, and I suddenly thought of appealing to Goering, who was at that time Minister of the Interior for Prussia. I intended to tell him that it was incomprehensible to me that I should be subjected to such injustice, if the new German government really intended to keep its word and maintain law and order as was customary in a civilised country. Through the good offices of a friend I got an introduction to Goering, who was then living in the Präsidenten Palast, near the Reichstag in Berlin. In November, 1934, I went there and while waiting to be received I heard a stormy interview

going on behind the double doors which led to his audience room. The visitor turned out to be the famous conductor Furtwängler who had called upon Goering to try to prevent the dismissal of his Jewish orchestra leader. Hard words were exchanged and Goering was not in a particularly good mood when I met him for the first time. However, I went straight to the point and asked him if the Third Reich made a habit of behaving so unjustly to foreigners, especially to Swedes. He asked me irritatedly what grounds I had for such an accusation, and I told him the facts. He became violent and questioned the truth of my statement, but ended by saying that if it could be verified he would remove all obstacles. He kept his word and in March, 1935, I called upon him to thank him for his help. I then said that if I in return could do anything to help his stepson, Tomas Kantzow, who lived in Stockholm and had just completed his education, I should be delighted to do so.

One day in May, 1935, when I was in my Stockholm office I received a telephone call from Goering in Berlin. He asked me if I remembered my offer and in that case if I could see his stepson the following day and get him a job. He was impulsive and excited and our short talk ended with an agreement that I should immediately take the young man in hand and try to procure him a business training.

This led to several further meetings with Goering, about once or twice a year. During our discussions I always tried to get some kind of idea of what the situation between Germany and Sweden was really like, but Goering preferred to touch on other subjects, especially that of Germany's relations with England, and the future plans of the Third Reich. His conversation was obviously permeated by his feeling that the German government was misunderstood and that both he and its other representatives were isolated and out of touch with the leading personalities in other countries. I was permitted to get a glimpse of the situation, and very peculiar it was. For their knowledge and attitude towards foreign political problems the government members were chiefly dependent on information obtained from their own

circles, from Hess, Rosenberg, Ribbentrop and a few others, some of them obscure nonentities. I found this very astonishing. Despite all the magnificent festivals and the excellent powers of organisation which were manifest in the arrangement of these festivals, the fact remained that there was absolutely no contact with leading foreign personalities.

I was in Baden-Baden in September when the conflict between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia reached its climax. Everybody whom I met there was, however, convinced that the crisis would find a peaceful solution: they said that they had faith in the Fuehrer's extraordinary skill and his desire to prevent military complications. I was all the more astonished when I heard Hitler's speech in Nuremberg on 12th September, on the radio in my hotel, for it contained no trace of desire to come to any understanding. It was interesting to note the expressions of all the Germans who had assembled in the large reception room of the Stephanie Hotel to listen to the speech. All without exception seemed to be disappointed and uneasy, and we did not have to wait long for results. Already the same evening several foreigners left Germany. The subsequent development of the crisis is well known. Chamberlain visited successively Berchtesgaden on 15th September, Godesberg on the 22nd, and Munich on the 29th. At Munich Czecho-Slovakia was betrayed and the fatal agreement, insuring what Mr. Chamberlain called "peace in our time," was made. Thanks to my acquaintance with Goering and some of those nearest to him I by degrees got a good notion of what had really happened on the German side during this crisis. I was in a position to be able to affirm that my previous opinion was correct, and that the German government was divided into two camps with different viewpoints about their foreign policy. The essence of National Socialism was bellicose and aggressive and completely devoid of all moral scruples in its dealings with other nations. Hitler and his protégé Ribbentrop thirsted after conquest. It was said that Goering had energetically striven for a peaceful solution of the Munich crisis and this had lessened his popularity within the German government.

We who have lived through the second World War in Europe, have learnt that an armed conflict was unavoidable and necessary, since there was no possibility of a radical change in the German course, for National Socialism was not compatible with a civilised world system, but in the spring and summer of 1939 the situation looked different, and despite all that the National Socialist régime had already accomplished in Germany, humanity shrank quite naturally from the prospect of another world war. It was the duty of the responsible politicians to do all that was possible to prevent such a catastrophe.

At this point it occurred to me—and my intimate knowledge of the English mentality strengthened my conviction—that it might possibly be of use if some of the influential members of the German government could have the opportunity of meeting some really prominent Englishmen, independent of whether they belonged to their government or not, and spend a few days together, when the Germans could learn something of the English point of view without any go-betweens. I had a feeling that the impression which the German politicians had acquired during the great festivals, either at Goebbels' sumptuous entertainments or the Olympic Games, Nuremberg meetings and so on, were of little value, always supposing that the Germans ever met any foreigners during these brief gatherings. With the exception of the foreign minister, Ribbentrop, who had been abroad as a commercial traveller and later as a disastrously unsuccessful Ambassador in London, and the taciturn Hess, the members of the German government were acquainted with no other country except their own and to a certain extent Italy.

Goering's utterances during the two occasions when I had met him in 1938, had certainly proved that as an ambitious man he was proud of being a General Field Marshal and chief of the German air force, which he had organised and built up to what he maintained to be the strongest in the world, and that he thoroughly enjoyed the power which now was his, but I realised that for some reason or other he did not like the idea of war. But during the two interviews we had together

that year he clearly expressed the German government's suspicion of England and the English government, and when discussing these questions he gave proof of a remarkable lack of reliable knowledge of the conditions in England and England's attitude towards Germany. It is of course possible that he was playing a part, and that his arguments were really intended to gloss over and excuse the aggression policy of Germany: of that I could not judge.

As for Hitler, I understood from what Goering said that he was excessively suspicious of England, a country of which he had the vaguest conception, but also, as has now been established, he cherished a frustrated admiration for her. But whether Hitler wanted peace with England or not, it was in my opinion of the utmost importance that he should get some authentic information on the subject, and therefore it was urgent that the man in his inner circle, who seemed genuinely inclined to peace, should be given a distinct picture of England and her policy, so that he in his turn could have positive facts with which to influence Hitler's attitude. That man was Goering.

CHAPTER III

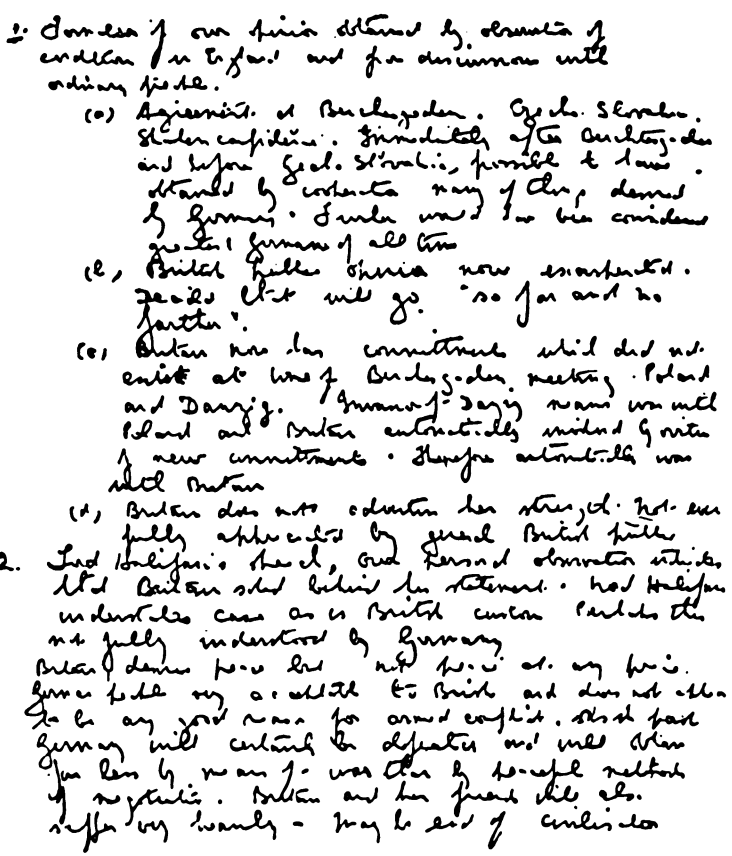
THE DINNER AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CLUB

On Midsummer Eve, 24th June, I travelled with a business friend by sea from Gothenburg to London. With us on the boat was Björn Prytz, my former chief in SKF and now Swedish Minister in London. During the journey the conversation naturally turned to the political situation, and Prytz gave us his point of view. He said that he hoped that the present differences might be solved by peaceful discussion, but considered that a state of war might develop between Germany and Poland. He inclined to the opinion that hostilities might be confined to a collision between those two countries. Although I had no professional knowledge of the political situation I declared that my conception of the English mentality and of recent developments in Germany, justified a certain pessimism in estimating the situation.

I arrived in London on the 26th and met a good many of my old friends. I then visited Manchester, Birmingham and Coventry, and everywhere the atmosphere was the same: the British nation was tired of the German government's acts of aggression, whether directed against Danzig or any other place. Hitler's perpetual excuses for breaking treaties and violating his neighbours' territories could not be tolerated in the long run. Whoever one spoke to, the man in the street, or more knowledgeable persons, the attitude was the same. Public opinion was strikingly unanimous and Chamberlain had been obliged to try a new tack: further concessions to Germany were unthinkable. One could only draw one conclusion from all this: war was unavoidable unless some arrangement could be reached in the immediate future.

On Sunday, 2nd July, a military review was held in Hyde Park in the presence of the King and Queen and a large number of officials. From the military point of view it was perhaps not so very imposing, since neither the equipment nor the precision could be compared with what the years of rearmament had achieved in Germany, but there was no mistaking the atmosphere. Every man in the ranks, every spectator on that occasion seemed to be inspired by the same inner resolve: there must be an end to power politics.

On my return to London from the provinces I had met other friends and had discussed with them an idea which had been germinating for some time: to try and arrange a meeting between some prominent Englishmen to members of the German government. In order to continue this discussion a number of these friends of mine, all leading lights in the financial and commercial world, asked me to dinner at the Constitutional Club on Sunday, 2nd July. The dinner was arranged by Mr. Charles Spencer, a leading member of the Conservative Party, a director of John Brown & Co., and of Associated Electrical Industries, financial adviser to the Wholesale Co-operative Society, and a man of great influence. In spite of the warmth with which I was greeted, I realised the seriousness of an occasion which had caused them to depart from the good old English tradition and sacrifice their Sunday to give a dinner in the heart of London. General conversation accompanied the meal and as is the custom in England there were no speeches until the end. To the surprise of those present Spencer read his from manuscript, which, as an experienced speaker, he was certainly not accustomed to do. He gave a straightforward and clear account of his point of view, stating that despite all the tolerance which could be expected of England, especially since she had emerged victorious from the war of 1914–18, Englishmen could no longer witness the policy which was being conducted by Germany without protest. He expressed his definite conviction that public opinion in England was weary of witnessing Germany's activities, which were generally staged so as to take the world by surprise. In spite of the consequences which



Tom Mensforth's notes, made during the dinner at the Constitutional Club, 2nd July, 1939.

a new world war might involve, he was convinced that no Englishman would hesitate for one instant to support the government if it decided to declare war, unless Germany changed her course and put a stop to her policy of aggression. This declaration came straight from the heart of an experienced elderly English gentleman; it was followed by variations

on the same theme from most of those present. The view points which were aired are so interesting that they must be reproduced. During the dinner Mr. Tom Mensforth made the following notes of the opinions of the Englishmen present (see page 25):

"(1) Formation of our opinion obtained by observation of conditions in England and from discussion with ordinary people.

(*a*) Agreement at Berchtesgaden. Czecho-Slovakia. Shaken confidence. Immediately after Berchtesgaden and before Czecho-Slovakia, possible have obtained by co-operation many of things desired by Germany. Führer would have been considered greatest German of all time.

(*b*) British public opinion now exasperated. Decided that will go 'so far and no farther.'

(*c*) Britain now has commitments which did not exist at time of Berchtesgaden meeting. Poland and Danzig. Invasion of Danzig means war with Poland and Britain automatically involved by virtue of new commitments. Therefore automatically war with Britain.

(*d*) Britain does not advertise her strength, not even fully appreciated by general British public.

(2) Lord Halifax's speech. Own personal observation indicates that Britain solid behind his statement. Lord Halifax understates case as is British custom. Perhaps then not fully understood by Germany.

(3) Britain desires peace but not peace at any price. German people very acceptable to British and does not appear to be any good reason for armed conflict. As in past Germany will certainly be defeated and will obtain far less by means of war than by peaceful methods of negotiation. Britain and her friends will also suffer very heavily. May be end of civilisation."

Finally Sir Holberry Mensforth summarised the general opinion by saying that it would of course be best if an attempt

were made to solve the problem by negotiation "before the killing started." There followed a general debate, in which we discussed the idea which had already been mentioned to several of those present, and it was decided that it might be worth while if Goering could through me obtain direct and significant information about the true situation in England; the more desirable as the information would come from a neutral source, which could rightly be regarded as impartial. If the plan to which I had already alluded could be put into action, and some of the members of the British government could be brought into contact with prominent Germans, it might in all our opinions have been possible to give the latter some notion of the actual attitude in England, in other words destroy the German government's delusion that it could continue behaving as it had during the past year. I promised to go to Berlin the following evening and try to meet Goering and tell him this.

On Wednesday, 5th July, I arrived in Berlin and was granted an interview with Goering the next day at 4 p.m. at Karinhall. Karinhall is situated in Schorf-Heide, about 35 miles north of Berlin, in very beautiful, rather hilly country with lakes and pine woods. On the way out I sat in the car and thought how much the place had altered in the course of a few years. When I first visited Karinhall in 1935 it consisted of a little "nordic" blockhouse built of logs. Inside was a large living-room with rough wooden walls, draped with a few hangings and furnished with old nordic pieces. Alongside was a smaller workroom for Goering himself, rather more modern in its furnishings but also strictly nordic in style, where he used to retire when he wanted to draw up his plans in peace and solitude. During his stay out there he seemed to adapt himself to the atmosphere and dressed up in a way that reminded me of Swedish 16th century attire. For instance, he would wear a shirt with flowing sleeves and over it a jerkin of yellow elkskin. He transported the ashes of his first wife, Karin, to this remote spot and called it after her. But what a change took place within a few years! The former blockhouse had been transformed into a sumptuous castle. It was true

that the living-room and the workroom were still here, but they formed a mere corner in the immense edifice.

On leaving the main road I discovered that the little hut which had previously stood at the turning had disappeared and had been replaced by a large modern barracks for the company which kept guard at Karinhall. After driving for a kilometre on the twisting side road one reached the inner park of Karinhall. It was surrounded by an ornate railing, and the road continued through large wrought-iron gates, whose posts were adorned with bronze statues. Other groups in bronze were scattered about the park, mostly representing scenes which recalled Goering's passion for nature and the chase. The main building, an enormous two-story house, the roof of which was thatched to emphasise its old German style, consisted of a *corps de logi* with two long wings. At the back, opposite the main building, was a house for the staff. There was a cinema in the basement, luxuriously equipped with seats for 100; also a typical German *Bierstube*, a kitchen for the ordinary household and a larger one for use on special festive occasions. On the ground floor there was a smaller dining-room and a drawing-room, used when the family was alone or entertaining a few friends. In addition there was a suite of state apartments. Goering's workroom had a raftered ceiling and was like all the rest of colossal dimensions. The walls were adorned with paintings by famous Old Masters, which he had obtained by some means or other, and there were other works of art as well. In general the room was dominated by large, heavy pieces of furniture representing the prevalent taste in the Third Reich.

As I have said, I could not help marvelling over the change which had come over Karinhall, and also over the fact that this transformation was really an example of what had happened to the leading National Socialists since their access to power. Their motto had been: Spartan living, effective popular government, the welfare of the people, and they had scoffingly shown up cases of the craving for luxury, misuse of power and so on which had occurred in the Germany of the Weimar Republic. It would be quite different when the fate

and development of Germany lay safe in the hands of National Socialism. Egoism, self-advancement and other degenerate German vices would vanish. "*Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz*" was their slogan.

But this slogan had nothing to do with reality. Karinhall in its new disguise was no isolated example. The leaders took more and more pleasure in surrounding themselves with pomp and luxury, and the tone which they set was contagious. Everywhere in Germany one could see traces of the new life as it was being led by the upper strata of National Socialists. They competed with each other in trying to sequestrate or acquire the biggest and most imposing buildings and then enlarge them still further, before they could be considered as fitting dwelling-places for the representatives of their political creed.

The car journey to Karinhall was nearing its end. We passed the archway leading to Schorf Heide's hunting-grounds. It was provided with an alarm with photo-electric cells: when any object passed through a signal functioned and a brilliant light flashed. This was in order to prevent deer and other game inside the hunting-ground from escaping, though there were no gates. After several kilometres' drive we turned into the road which led to Karinhall. The guard, who had obviously been warned of our visit, threw back the gates and those of the inner park were as swiftly opened. As we approached I discovered that the place was full of workmen, many hundreds of them, engaged in building on to Karinhall. I heard that the great castle was going to be doubled in size, and the work was proceeding at a great rate. What a task for one of the leading members of the government at a time when there was still much to do before the consequences of the first World War could be said to have been overcome!

The atmosphere was festive when I came to Karinhall. There was to be a garden party at 5 o'clock, for hundreds of people, mainly from the film and theatrical world. I was received by several officers from Goering's air squadron, dressed in pure white uniforms with white patent leather shoes. The uniforms were covered with gold lace and reminded

me of the rococo period with its tendency towards exaggeration and luxury. One bus after another arrived with musicians and performers who were to entertain the guests. There was no hint of gravity in the surroundings or anything to give the impression that a war might at any moment be imminent.

As soon as I met Goering I told him that I had come straight from England, and that I was genuinely anxious to give him the impressions I had taken away with me. Without beating about the bush I described the attitude and the determination which I had seen everywhere among the British people. I said that Britain was no longer inclined to tolerate any aggression policy from Germany. Goering made a long speech in reply in which he tried to elucidate the German policy and motivate the justice of the German claims concerning Danzig and the Corridor. He rejected every attempt to interpret these claims as aggression policy as utterly unfounded and ended up by pointing out that Britain's interference in Germany's internal affairs was a manifestation of her old well-known effort to prevent the development of a powerful Germany. Goering characterised Britain's attitude in the Danzig question as sheer bluff, and told me I could be assured that in no circumstances would the British support their guarantee to Poland by force of arms.

When we had reached this point one of the white-clad adjutants appeared and said that the guests were beginning to arrive. It was then about a quarter to five. However, Goering continued the discussion and I declared that I was personally absolutely sure that if he and perhaps some other members of the German government could meet some prominent Englishmen, he would soon be convinced of the accuracy of my assertions. I suggested that such a meeting should take place in Sweden, preferably with an official host, if it could be arranged so that the Germans could meet the Englishmen at their leisure and get the chance of a heart-to-heart talk. Goering replied that neither he nor the German government could consider such a proposition until they had received an answer to the question of whether England were bluffing or not, and if it were not true that the English attitude was

based on her hostile and envious attitude towards Germany. I declined to answer this question, but instead I suggested that since three of the men with whom I had dined on the 2nd were now in Copenhagen I should telephone to them and ask them to come to Berlin where they would have the opportunity of giving a reasoned reply. The discussion continued, time went on, and one adjutant after another arrived to report that the guests had been waiting for a whole hour. Goering answered that he had more important matters to attend to, so the guests had to possess their souls in patience.

Soon after 6 o'clock I returned to Berlin and immediately rang up Spencer, who promised to fly to Berlin on Friday morning together with those friends who were travelling with him. On 7th July at 11.30 they arrived at the Esplanade Hotel. I gave them an account of my conversation with Goering, and they naturally said that it would be excessively unfortunate if the German government assumed that Britain was bluffing and would tolerate measures from Germany which were in conflict with the agreements into which they had entered. There could be no doubt that Britain would fulfil the obligations undertaken towards Poland, and it was extremely important that the German government should be enlightened about this. As for the attitude of Britain towards Germany, they merely ratified what had been so often stated by the British government, public opinion and press, that Britain desired peaceful and orderly conditions in Europe and above all security against any policy of aggression. All three were alike actuated by the wish to achieve positive results, and again they affirmed their conviction that a meeting on Swedish soil could be of great use, particularly when taking into account the warped conception which the Germans seemed to have of the British government's true intentions and the objectives of British policy.

In the afternoon Goering rang up to hear if the Englishmen had come and if they had given any answer to his questions. I replied in the affirmative and gave him a general outline of the contents of the Englishmen's reply, which entirely

confirmed what I had already told him. Goering then asked if they would care to visit the Ministry of Aviation. This invitation was accepted and he sent a General to fetch us at the Esplanade and take us round the newly built Ministry. Afterwards we drank tea at Haus der Fleiger, and then did a tour of the town, while the General described the plans for Berlin's reconstruction.

The Englishmen left Berlin on the morning of Saturday, 8th July and I went out to Karinhall to tell Goering the result of our discussion. He announced that he had conferred with Hitler about my proposal for a meeting in Sweden. Hitler had agreed in principle, but had emphasized as a prerequisite condition the necessity of holding the conference in such a manner that it could not possibly be known that prominent members of both camps had met to discuss the European situation.

On this decision I returned to Berlin and flew to Stockholm the same day. In the aeroplane on the way from Berlin to Stockholm I tried to collect my impressions of the events which I had witnessed since I left Gothenburg on 24th June. I had intended to negotiate some business transactions on Bolinder's behalf while in England, but the general political atmosphere had been such that nobody took any interest in enlarging their business, in view of the uncertain future. It was clear to me that there was considerable risk of a new world war, and that everything must be done to prevent it.

My first and last query was: was there any chance that the calmer elements in the German government, given a chance of intimate contact with leading Englishmen, would be able to convince themselves that Germany must refrain from power politics?

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFERENCE AT SÖNKE NISSEN KOOG

AFTER my return to Stockholm on 8th July I got into touch with P. A. Hansson, the Prime Minister, and managed to see him on Monday, 10th July. I had known him for a long time and knew that he had a very realistic point of view, but I had no notion of his attitude towards questions of foreign policies in the Europe of the day. I gave an account of my visit to England, the attitude which I had found there, and also of my visit to Berlin and my talk with Goering. I told him that this was a chance for Swedish initiative, and suggested that the King or the Swedish Government should invite some Englishmen and Germans to meet at some castle or country seat where as the guests of a Swede they would have the opportunity of examining the problems which were under discussion. I do not think that the Prime Minister shared my opinion regarding the seriousness of the political situation in the world; rather I got the impression that he hoped that the Polish conflict might be solved on a friendly basis. However, he promised me to consult Sandler, the Foreign Minister, and then tell me the government's reaction to the proposition.

On Thursday the 13th I met him again, and he said that after an exhaustive discussion with Sandler he had come to the conclusion that it would be unwise of the Swedish government to take any initiative in such a question. As far as I can understand, he considered that the problem would be solved anyhow, and also that even if Sweden were in no way mixed up with the actual negotiations, but merely acted as host, it might still be regarded in certain quarters as an unnuetral

act. Here he was thinking chiefly of Poland. On the other hand he declared that he would have no objections if I or some other private individual arranged a meeting of the same kind, but it must take place on our personal responsibility and the Swedish state must have nothing to do with it. If such an invitation were sent forth he asked me to see to it that the meeting should take place in South Sweden, where there would be less risk of the secret leaking out.

Naturally this conversation disappointed me, partly because the Prime Minister did not share my opinion regarding the importance of my suggestions, and partly because I considered that an invitation of the kind that I had in mind would be of real value only if it were official. However, during the next few days I examined the possibilities of achieving this contact between the national representatives by private means. One primary condition had to be fulfilled; on no condition must any outsider know what was going on. I discussed the matter with several people, especially the difficulty of arranging the meeting without letting it be generally known. If well-known English and German personages went through the Swedish customs there would be a great risk of it coming to public knowledge, and it would be difficult for anybody with such a noticeable appearance as Goering, for instance, to avoid recognition. The only chance seemed to be to arrange the meeting at some castle or country seat in South Sweden, which could be reached by sea so that the better-known members could avoid the usual routes. Count C. W. Trolle-Wachtmeister of Trolle Ljungby was asked if he would be kind enough to play host at the proposed conference and I flew to London on 19th July. On arrival there I was met by a telegram saying that everything was arranged, and when later in the evening I rang up Stockholm it was confirmed that Trolle-Wachtmeister was willing to place his castle at our disposal. A close friend introduced me to Lord Halifax, and later I had a couple of conferences with him and was able to tell him my plans and point of view. Halifax also was of the opinion that a discussion in an atmosphere free from all constraint between leading

Englishmen and members of the German government could be of use, but he explained that the British government did not want to be directly involved or send any of its members to the conference. On the other hand it would be interested to receive a detailed account of the results from the Englishmen who took part in it. If these results proved to be of a positive nature, this first meeting ought to pave the way for a future conference between authorized delegates, which could take place in Holland or Sweden.

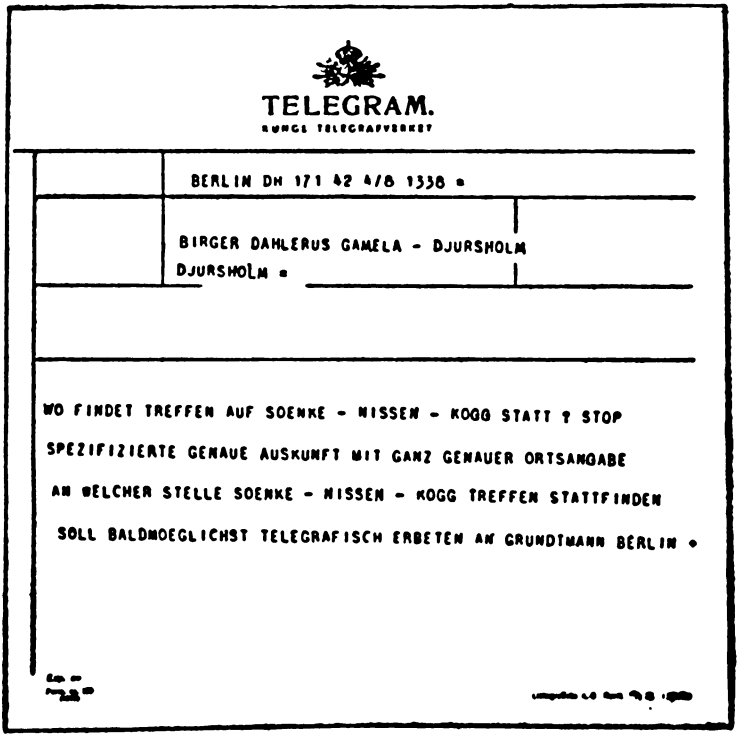
During this time my friends in England had thoroughly examined the problem. We had been in constant contact by telephone and a delegation of seven persons under the leadership of Mr. Charles Spencer had been selected. They were all prominent business men, but none of them was a member either of the government or of Parliament.

The English delegates had carefully thought out the questions which must come under discussion: the points on which they considered they could request enlightenment regarding Germany's policy and also the points on which they wished to enlighten Germany, especially in connection with the English distrust of the power politics which were becoming more and more characteristic of Germany's foreign policy. After having collaborated with these Englishmen on a programme for the coming conference I flew on Saturday the 21st of July to Hamburg, where I was due to meet Goering in order to conclude the arrangements.

Goering received me at 8 p.m. at the Atlantic Hotel and told me that he had had a conference with Hitler, who had accepted the proposal that such a meeting should be held, but only on condition that I gave my personal guarantee that there was no risk of anybody hearing about it. I considered that I could not give any such guarantee, since a number of people in Sweden, such as servants and other people unknown to me, must know what was going on. I therefore said frankly that I could not give the guarantee but maintained my point that a contact like the one proposed would be of great value, and made the alternative suggestion that the meeting as agreed should take place at a house belonging to my wife, which was

situated in Schleswig-Holstein near the Danish frontier. If the conference took place there it would be up to the German government to see that nothing was known about it, and since the place and the hosts were Swedish, despite the situation on German soil, there might be a chance that the Englishmen would agree to go there. Goering immediately accepted this suggestion. That night I rang up Spencer who promised to find out if the Englishmen would also agree to it, and let me know the following evening.

On Sunday, 22nd July the National Socialist Kraft durch Freude organisation had arranged a great festival in Hamburg. In the morning there was a procession through the town which I watched as a guest. The participants marched past the town hall before Goering, Dr. Ley, and Kauffman, the governor of Hamburg. There were representatives of different branches of industry, as well as agriculture and commercial life in general, and many of them wore national costumes. Later in the evening I went out to see the notorious ship *Dr. Ley*, which had been built by Kraft durch Freude for holiday travel. When I came on board Dr. Ley recognised me and we stood talking on the poop. Dr. Ley, together with his much-talked-of young wife, was noticeably under the influence of the excellent dinner which had preceded the visit to the ship, and he proceeded to criticise Sweden who, in his opinion, had not adopted the right attitude towards Germany, and in general did not exhibit the respectful and attentive attitude which he thought was the due of the National Socialist government. This was the only occasion on which I had the chance to talk at any length to Dr. Ley and when I left him I had the impression that he was an exceedingly irresponsible person entirely devoid of any of the qualifications necessary to a man in his position. I had an unpleasant feeling that if Dr. Ley, such a bird of ill omen, should have a voice in any important decisions there would not be much chance of reaching a satisfactory result. That night Spencer rang me up and said the Englishmen had no objection to coming to my wife's place, Sönke Nissen Koog in North Friesland, on the west coast close to the Danish frontier.



TELEGRAM.

BERLIN DH 171 42 4/8 1338 •

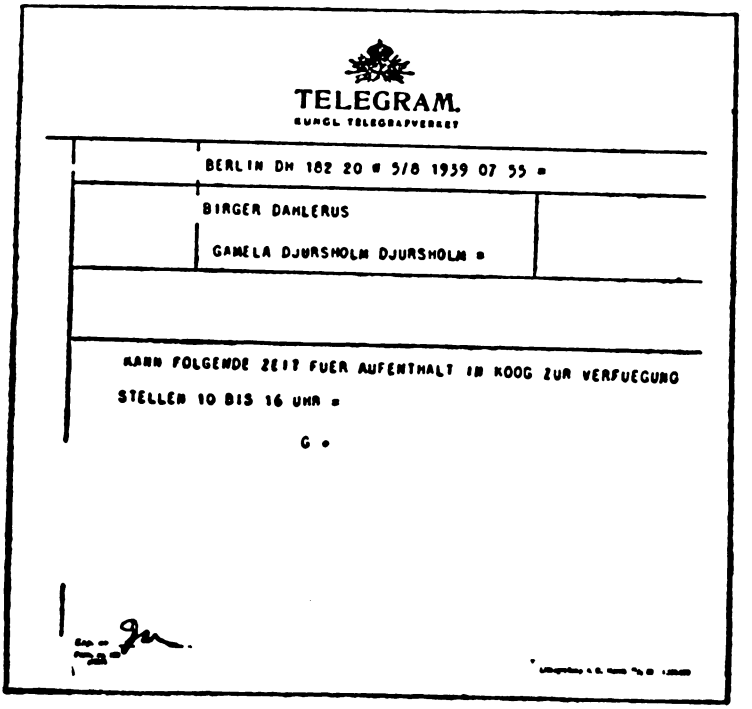
BIRGER DAHLERUS GAMLA - DJURSHOLM
DJURSHOLM •

WO FINDET TREFFEN AUF SOENKE - NISSEN - KOGG STATT ? STOP
SPEZIFIZIERTE GENAUE AUSKUNFT MIT GANZ GENAUER ORTSANGABE
AN WELCHER STELLE SOENKE - NISSEN - KOGG TREFFEN STATTFINDEN
SOLL BALDMOEGLICHST TELEGRAFISCH ERBETEN AN GRUNDTMANN BERLIN •

Telegram from Goering's secretary, asking where conference was to take place.

On the 24th I flew back to London to arrange the preparations for the conference with my English friends. I met Halifax again and he expressed clearly his distrust of the German government's attitude and expounded at length the views of the leaders of the British government about the political problems of the world. He emphasised particularly that the guarantee which Britain had given to Poland would be fulfilled whatever the circumstances.

On 26th July I returned to Stockholm by air to make my own preparations for the visit to Sönke Nissen Koog. I had



TELEGRAM.

KUNGL. TELEGRAFVERKET

BERLIN DH 182 20 = 5/8 1939 07 55 =

BIRGER DAHLERUS

GAMLA DJURSHOLM DJURSHOLM =

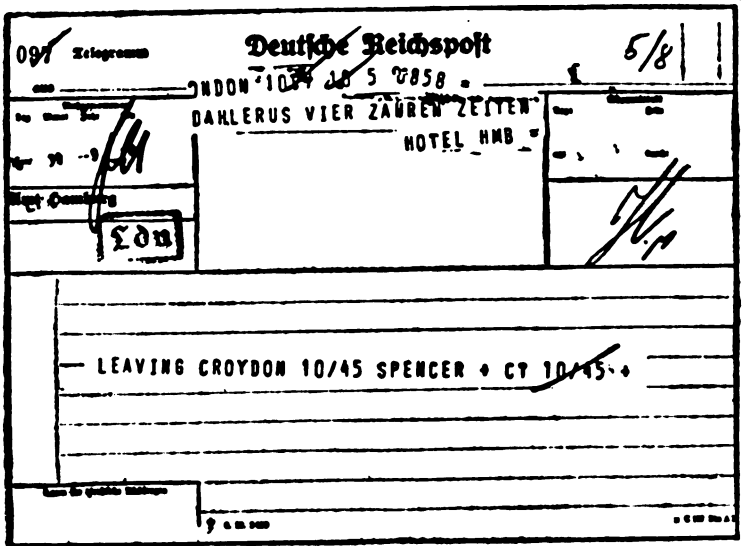
KANN FOLGENDE ZEIT FUER AUFENTHALT IM KOOG ZUR VERFUEGUNG STELLEN 10 BIS 16 UHR =

G =

Goering's confirmation of the time of the Sönke Nissen Koog conference.

decided to do all that I could to help the meeting to take place in a friendly atmosphere and that all the guests should clearly realise that they were in a Swedish home, even if it were on foreign soil. I presumed that this would help materially to contribute to a frank discussion between the representatives of the two nations. I tried to go over all the problems which were connected with the visit, all the steps which I must take so that neither side should get a wrong impression. The meeting was to take place in the form of a week-end party at Sönke Nissen Koog, officially for some of my Swedish friends.

In this tense atmosphere of intrigue I had to supervise


Deutsche Reichspost

DAHLERUS VIER ZAUBREN ZEITEN

HOTEL HMB

LEAVING CROYDON 10/45 SPENCER

Mr. Charles Spencer's confirmation of the 5th August, regarding his departure from Croydon for Sönke Nissen Koog.

from Stockholm all arrangements for the enjoyment of my guests, and see that everything was complete, down to the smallest detail. The conference was to take place in a Swedish home and I tried in various ways to make my wife's house as Swedish as possible for the period of the visit. For instance, I got the well-known Stockholm firm, Arvid Nordquist, to send quantities of typical Swedish delicacies to Sönke Nissen Koog.

In order to ensure that none of the conversation at meal-times should be overheard by my German servants, I took my two trusted chauffeurs, Johansson and Karlsson, with me. They drove the English guests from Hamburg to Sönke Nissen Koog in Swedish cars and waited at table there. It is to the credit of both of them that they fulfilled their tasks extremely well and never to my knowledge let anybody know about their experiences.

On Saturday, 5th August I arrived in Hamburg and the

chauffeurs, who had travelled by car, came the same evening. My seven English friends reached Hamburg by different routes, and in order to avoid calling attention to themselves they stayed some at the Atlantic and others at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten. On the Saturday night we went through the problems which lay before us and compared the information which we had obtained from various sources concerning the events of the past weeks. On Saturday 6th August we made a tour of Hamburg, lunched at the Bürgerhaus and then met one of my German friends, the architect Johann Gottfried Schramm, at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten. His mother had been English and I knew that since childhood he had had close contact with England; I had always looked upon him as broad-minded and up to now he had never shown any sign of being influenced by National Socialist ideas. I was anxious that he should tell the Englishmen how a person in his position viewed the political situation, and especially what the circles in which he moved thought of the relations between Germany and Britain.

But Schramm was very pessimistic and emphasised that Germany was struggling against great difficulties and could not right herself because of the measures taken by the Allied powers. He laid particular stress upon the fact that all Germans had the sensation of a heavy yoke upon their shoulders, a burden of economic troubles, from which they could not liberate themselves, as long as the rest of Europe thwarted their country's ambitions.

His bitterness towards England was especially noticeable. He had taken part in the first World War as an airman, but he was also a representative of Hamburg opinion, and Hamburg was supposed to be more friendly disposed towards England, and altogether more reasonable than other parts of Germany. The Englishmen listened thoughtfully to Schramm's remarks, and it was clear that they found them amazing.

On Sunday afternoon we went in our Swedish cars adorned with Swedish flags to Sönke Nissen Koog, where the guests were received by my brother- and sister-in-law, Captain and Frau Rabe. They had spared no efforts to make everything

as pleasant as possible for the seven Englishmen, and in order that they should have every comfort I had taken a room for myself in a little hotel, Landwirtschaftliches Haus in Bredstedt, which was the nearest German town, about seven miles away.

My English friends went to bed early so as to be in good form for the negotiations next day. I left for Bredstedt and retired to my room to get a few hours' rest. I went to bed, but I was much too excited to be able to sleep. My thoughts circled endlessly round the problems which lay before us. I had heard them so thoroughly discussed from both sides that I considered that I had a fair picture of the principal one. But what did Hitler, and with him the German government and the entire Nazi Party, really want? Were his promises to the German people merely a pretext for a rearmament which would enable him to satisfy an inordinate lust for power? Or was it all merely the outcrop of a lunatic's crazy ideas? At that time one could still ask such questions.

I had no personal knowledge of him, but one thing was quite clear, and it had come to the fore in connection with the Czecho-Slovak controversy: Hitler liked a gamble and had no objection to the most brutal methods. Some of the German military leaders had warned him as early as the time of the occupation of the Rhineland, and subsequently before all the ventures which he had undertaken, but everything had gone well, the advisers had always been wrong, and the result had been that they soon found themselves dismissed in disgrace. It was quite obvious that Hitler was a disturbing element and an incalculable factor. There could scarcely be any doubt that the policy of interference and aggression of the past few years had been the direct result of his personal attitude, nor that the majority of his advisers were typical adventurers and fortune-hunters, who by unscrupulous power politics hoped to secure an increase in authority and influence, and who utterly failed to realise the opposition which such a policy must encounter throughout the world.

I had met Goering so often that I had a fairly good idea

of him. It was well known that he had distinguished himself as an officer and received the *Pour le Mérite*, the old German Empire's highest decoration, and that he had joined the National Socialist movement for idealistic reasons while it was still in its cradle. He had experienced varying and difficult times during the period of his marriage to Karin Fock; at one time he had known real penury, had become addicted to morphine and had been sent to an asylum. After *die Machtübernahme* he had become one of the most powerful men in Germany, and both his good and bad qualities had been sharply emphasised. In connection with the Reichstag fire and murders of 30th June, 1934, he had given vent to the unbalanced brutality of his nature, but when conditions became calmer, he had soon achieved and long maintained a genuine popularity among the broad masses of the German people. It was well known that he was possessed of an insatiable passion for luxury and a childish delight in dressing up in gaudy and fantastic uniforms and costumes. His collector's passion made him positively greedy, which was strange for a man in his position. He could be extremely violent and had an incredible lust for power. At the same time he seemed to have a sense of humour, was clear-sighted and had a remarkably good memory. There was a good chance that despite his passion for his Luftwaffe Goering was wise enough to realise the absolute advantages of a peaceful solution in Europe, but the question was, had he the courage to risk his position and at a critical moment take up a resolute attitude which might lead to his dismissal if he failed to become master of the situation. During the pogroms of November 1938 Goering had stood aloof, and shortly after the destruction of Jewish property which had been organised by Goebbels he told me that he strongly disapproved of such measures. It was obvious, however, that he did not dare to make any gallant attempt to prevent any repetition of them or to see that those responsible for such revolting acts of terrorism were removed from their posts and punished.

What would happen on the morrow? Would the meeting produce any positive results? Would both sides be able to

present viewpoints which might render possible the prosecution of the plan to arrange a personal contact capable of preventing a new catastrophe? Would Goering be so influenced by what he heard that he might think it over? Would the visit continue in such a spirit that the Englishmen would be able to feel some confidence in Goering? And would Goering, if totally convinced of the need and feasibility of a peaceful settlement, be able to prove himself sufficiently strong to carry his point with the German government?

The night passed. I did not sleep at all, for all the problems kept recurring to my mind. I had received new and precise details about German rearmament, which showed me all the horrors which a new world war would entail for Europe. The technical evolution of modern instruments of destruction meant that a new European war could not but develop into a universal conflagration with incalculable results. An unknown citizen of a little neutral country, I knew only too well how terribly little I as an individual could accomplish, but if there was anything to be done to stave off a catastrophe, I wanted to do it.

The weather was lovely on Monday, 7th August, as I drove out to Sönke Nissen Koog to breakfast with my English guests. Their faces were tense and serious, and there was no mistaking their earnest resolve to do their individual and collective best to attain a result. At 8 o'clock I left Sönke Nissen Koog to meet Goering at Bredstedt. The Swedish flag was hoisted on the main building as a token that the guests had been invited to a Swedish home on neutral ground. The German government had requested that the conference should be kept secret and had taken every precaution to prevent anything from being known; so effective were these precautions that nothing was known in Germany or any other country about our meeting. Goering's special train arrived early in the morning and I met for the first time several of his closest collaborators: his first adjutant, Ministerialrat Görnert, Köruev, the Secretary of State, who under Goering was responsible for the four years' plan, both the representatives who were to be present at the negotiations, General

Bodenschatz, "liaison officer" between Goering and Hitler, and Dr. Schrötter, who was to interpret.

— In the course of an hour's conversation with Goering on the train, he gave his opinion of the foreign political situation and the result which he thought that the day's meeting ought to bring about. This was a mutual agreement regarding the holding of an Anglo-German conference with plenipotentiary representatives from both governments. A *sine qua non* was, of course, that to-day's negotiations proved that an official conference could yield some positive result.

Afterwards we entered the cars which were waiting at Bredstedt station, and arrived at Sönke Nissen Koog at 10 o'clock. The guests were immediately introduced to each other. They exchanged the most friendly greetings and it was plain that both sides were determined that the meeting should take place in an atmosphere which facilitated a real exchange of opinions.

We sat down in the big living-room and the discussion began. I was present from start to finish and opened the conference with a few words in German and English. The programme went according to plan: the various political questions which had given rise to the present gloomy international situation were frankly and pertinently discussed.

Goering told the Englishmen to ask questions which he, with his expert knowledge of the German attitude, would do his best to answer. It was not long before the most vital problem, i.e., the developments following Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden, was brought up. The Englishmen quoted Hitler's promises. They recalled his definite statement that he did not want to incorporate other nations into the German Reich, and his promise to respect the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia. They emphasised the genuine English desire to prevent any armed conflict, and underlined the importance of trying to solve the problems by negotiation, during which both sides must respect honest viewpoints. After about an hour of general discussion Goering described at length the German National Socialist government's policy since 1933. He said that at the first session of the German government

under Hitler's presidency, the Chancellor had been emphatic in telling his colleagues that German policy must be pro-English, that Germany must strive to work together with England. Goering proceeded to criticise the chilly attitude adopted by England towards the National Socialist government, the frequent drastic proofs of mistrust on the part of the British, the sharp criticism in the British Press of the German government and the lack of determination shown by the British government when it came to declaring the country's attitude on vital points. He declared that at the time of the Italian-Abyssinian crisis Germany had offered to support the English sanctions against Italy, providing she were given a free hand when dealing with Austria; in other words England should not hinder a union between Austria and Germany. On this occasion, Goering continued, there had been a chance of tightening up the connections between England and Germany, but the former had refused to consider the German proposal and demanded adhesion to the sanctions policy without taking up any attitude to the Austrian question.

Goering defended, though partly against his own convictions, the measures which had been taken regarding Czecho-Slovakia. The arguments which he here presented were the same as those which had been published during the diplomatic negotiations over this matter. As time passed and the atmosphere became more intimate he became more animated and outspoken. He maintained that Britain ought to realise that the situation in Europe was quite different now from what it had been after the world war. Britain ought to have noticed that of late Germany had abstained from all criticism of Soviet Russia and he also underlined that Britain should not ignore the fact that the Rapallo treaty was not terminated. On their side the Englishmen pointed out in a clear and businesslike way the risks attendant on the repeated German tactics which consisted in vehemently alleging the ill-treatment of German minorities in a country, followed by a request for instant solution of the problems related thereto, a solution which always contained a demand that the territory under discussion be incorporated with the German Reich.

Such offhand methods were calculated to arouse distrust in other countries, including England. Goering replied by giving them his "sacred assurance as a statesman and an officer" that the German demands for Danzig and a corridor contained no designs for any encirclement policy against Poland, and would not be followed by any further demands for other territories.

After a very animated discussion we assembled for luncheon at 1.30, and I followed the old Swedish custom of wishing the guests welcome to the table, at the same time expressing the hope that the meeting should lead to a positive result and that constructive proposals should emanate afterwards, proposals which could ensure a peaceful solution of the problems. I ended by expressing my pleasure that a Swedish home should receive prominent guests who were obviously working towards such an end. Shortly afterwards Goering got up, raised his glass and toasted the English representatives, concluding by proposing a general toast to peace. The atmosphere was as favourable as it could be, and I believe that even the most critical observer would have been obliged to draw the conclusion that if such a contact could continue, there really was a chance that the questions might be peaceably resolved.

The negotiations continued after luncheon, and the result can be summarised as follows:

In view of the spirit in which the discussions had been conducted, those present were of the opinion that a meeting between authorised delegates from both countries ought to lead to an agreement, and they therefore united in deciding to recommend to their respective governments that a conference of that kind be arranged as soon as possible, preferably on Swedish soil.

Time went on and the conference continued until late in the afternoon. On leaving, the Englishmen and Germans toasted each other. Goering left at 6.30 by car for Neibüll and went from there to Sylt in his special train, and my English guests, after a late dinner, withdrew to their own rooms to write an account of the day's discussion. We finished work at

2 a.m. and parted with the feeling that there was some prospect of arriving at a good result.

The next morning, Tuesday, 8th August, I breakfasted at Sönke Nissen Koog with the Englishmen at 9 o'clock, and afterwards we speculated on the outcome of the conversations of the day before. The Englishmen were inclined to the opinion that it might be better if the proposed conference between British and German government delegates could be extended to include representatives of the French and Italian governments; in other words, the two-power conference should become a four-power conference. They asked me to contact Goering at once to hear if he thought that the Germans would accept the suggestion.

I telephoned to Sylt where I was told that General Bodenschatz had flown to Berchtesgaden at 11 that morning to give Hitler the result of the conference. I got hold of Goering on the telephone at 2 o'clock and he asked me to take the next train to Sylt to confer with him. The island of Sylt is connected with the mainland by a long railway embankment, so that it can only be reached by train. I took the 16.39 from Niebüll to Sylt and Goering met me at the station. He suggested that we should take a drive in the car so as to be able to discuss the new suggestion in peace.

During the drive Goering expressed his satisfaction with the result of the previous day's conversations, and opined that the proposal of a four-power conference could be acceptable to the Germans, but he strongly emphasised the importance of preliminary discussions if these were possible, and also that the questions should be clearly defined; under no circumstances must a conference be held which did not lead to a positive result; anything else would be a catastrophe. The car drive was longer than we had calculated and the last train from Sylt was due to leave, but Goering had given orders that it should wait until we returned to the station. I was thereby enabled to get back to the mainland and meet Spencer at 9.30 at a little *Bierkneipe* in Niebüll about 20 miles north of Sönke Nissen Koog. Spencer made notes of the account which I gave him of my talk at Sylt; then he returned

to Sönke Nissen Koog, fetched the other Englishmen and they drove back to Hamburg, leaving the next day by air for London. I continued northwards by car and spent the night at Fredericia. Next morning at 5 o'clock I dashed on to Copenhagen, and reached the Danish capital two minutes before the ordinary Stockholm plane was due to leave Kastrup at 11. I managed to catch it and arrived in Stockholm at 3 p.m., tired but hopeful.

Throughout the following week I was in constant touch with London by telephone. After three days I could tell them that the Germans had accepted the proposal of a four-power conference, and would prefer it to take place in Sweden. My point of vantage did not enable me to know all that was happening, but I waited and hoped that developments would permit this to be realised. I met Hansson, the Prime Minister, and told him what had happened. I pointed out how important it was that the Swedish government should accommodate the British and German governments if these should agree on a conference, and express the desire that Sweden should play host at it. This was all that would be required of Sweden, for the country would in no way be involved in any of the debates about the questions which were to be the subject of the conference.

Now followed an episode which is inexplicable to me and which proved to be fatal. The negotiations came to a sudden stop. All I could learn from Spencer who had gone to Aix-les-Bains was that no English answer could be forthcoming for some time, for many of the influential personages involved had gone away for their annual holiday. I became more and more uneasy, but there was nothing to be done.

In the meanwhile the political situation became rapidly worse. On Saturday, 19th August, Spencer rang me up late at night and asked if I could be in Paris for a conference on Monday. I found this incomprehensible, for the final decision had to be reached in London, and on Sunday, 20th, I declined to come to Paris but expressed my willingness to go to London, if any good could come of it.

In the afternoon of Monday, 21st August, came the news

of a commercial treaty between Russia and Germany, and next morning that a non-aggression pact was to be concluded the following day. I instantly realised that this move had considerably lessened the chances of a favourable outcome. Ribbentrop was to go to Moscow as representative of the German government, and it was plain that Hitler had succeeded in offering the Soviet Union conditions which made it worth its while to break off its protracted negotiations with the Allies and instead enter into a non-aggression pact with Germany. Ribbentrop had always been inimically disposed towards England, and I could not believe that this pact could contain any settlements liable to lead to a favourable outcome for the situation in Europe.

On Wednesday the 23rd, at 10.20, Goering rang me up and asked me to come at once to Berlin. He declared that the situation had become much worse and that the chances of a peaceable solution had seriously diminished. I felt uneasy and in my mind's eye I saw the complications which must ensue. This led me to try to get into touch with Hansson. He was holiday-making in the archipelago but was kind enough to come into Stockholm, where we met on Wednesday afternoon. I told him what I had learnt and that I had been asked to go to Berlin the next day. The Prime Minister did not seem to share my opinion of the gravity of the situation. He hinted that the reports which had come to the knowledge of the Swedish government did not warrant the anticipation of any crisis. Certainly he had heard that the Dutch Prime Minister had called all the government members back from their holidays for a conference at the Hague, but he himself did not consider that the situation required him to ask his colleagues to break up their vacations. He added that even if developments became critical, all possible preparations for such a situation had already been made in Sweden. Finally he emphasised the importance that I on my side should undertake nothing which might damage Swedish interests. I replied that on no occasion had I acted otherwise than as a private individual, and that I had never either directly or indirectly brought Swedish politics or Swedish interests into my activities.

CHAPTER V

BERLIN AND LONDON
24TH—26TH AUGUST

ON Thursday, 24th August I left Stockholm at 8 a.m. and flew to Berlin where I went straight to the Esplanade Hotel to find out when I could see Goering. I was told that at 12.30 I would be fetched by car, and our meeting would take place at Karinhall.

I rang up a personal friend, the banker Allan Wettermark, and asked him to come to the hotel. He worked in Berlin and knew all about the conditions in Germany, and I felt the need of a reliable Swedish friend to whom I could confide. Somebody must know what I was doing, someone who could help me if necessary. I told Wettermark about my negotiations and that I was going to meet Goering, whereupon he said that Goering's influence was much less than it had been owing to his definite repugnance to a war. Wettermark considered that I was risking arrest or detention if I discussed peace plans with Goering against Hitler's will. He insisted on being present at my departure for Karinhall, so as to be able to tell the Swedish minister what had happened if I did not come back the same evening.

I left by car as had been arranged at 12.30 and my discussion with Goering began at Karinhall at 2 o'clock. He gave me a comprehensive *exposé* of the military and political situation, and particularly pointed out the considerable improvement in the German position thanks to the agreement with Russia. Hitler had always tried to avoid the repetition of earlier mistakes and above all a war on two or more fronts. Goering now emphasised that this risk had disappeared, thanks to the Russian treaty, but at the same time he laid

stress on the German government's constant and genuine desire to come to an agreement with Britain. He regretted that the projected conference had not materialised, but during the conversation he tried to present the situation as though forthcoming developments would be wholly dependent on British attitude and initiative. At the same time he asked me to go to England on the following day to confirm the German desire to come to an understanding with the British government and to say that Goering would employ all his influence to attain this object.

The reason for this request, which was uttered with great eagerness, was his disbelief that *Auswärtiges Amt* would be able or willing to establish a sufficiently close contact with the Foreign Office to permit of a peaceable solution. He had to go to Berlin at 4 o'clock, where he was to have a private interview with the Polish ambassador Lipski, and now he declared that he counted on his personal friendship with Lipski to be able to reach an understanding with Poland. After his talk with Lipski he was due at the Chancellery for a conference with Hitler and Ribbentrop. The latter was expected back in the course of the afternoon from his fateful visit to Moscow, and Hitler was coming from Berchtesgaden. Goering was anxious to continue the conversation and to voice all his notions on the situation, so he called for a two-seater and drove me back to Berlin. He was a good driver and when we had to stop in front of the red lights in the middle of the Berlin traffic and he was recognised by the crowd he got quite an ovation. Obviously he was very popular and could go about anywhere in safety without a bodyguard. During the drive he told me that Chamberlain was to make a speech that afternoon in the House of Commons, and he promised to telephone me later in the evening and tell me what sort of an impression it had made on the German government, and also to give me the contents of the Russian agreement.

At 11.30 he rang up the hotel and said that Chamberlain's speech had made a favourable impression; at the same time he said that the agreement with Russia would have far more widespread results than had been hinted at in the official

communiqué. Again he emphasised the importance of my immediate departure to England to inform the British government how vitally important it was that negotiations should take place as soon as possible, and affirmed once more Germany's desire to come to an agreement with England.

In view of the discussion at Karinhall and Goering's observations about the lack of contact between the two governments I decided to make another effort, or rather to prosecute my previous attempt which had seemed so hopeful a couple of weeks ago. I flew to London on Friday, 25th August, at 8 a.m., in the ordinary passenger plane and arrived at Croydon at 1.30. In the course of the afternoon I met my English friends at an office in Westminster and made out a report in writing which was immediately sent to Downing Street to be submitted to the inner cabinet.

About 5 o'clock Spencer told me that Sir Nevile Henderson had been invited to visit the Chancellery in Berlin to confer with Hitler, and that thereby the official channels for discussion had been opened. This must be regarded as a good omen. If the German government as a whole was inspired with the same spirit which had been evident in my talk with Goering, a meeting of that description could result in the official negotiations which we had sought.

At 6.30 p.m. I was called to the Foreign Office to meet Lord Halifax. Among other things he said that he felt more optimistic since hearing of Henderson's visit to Hitler, and though he had not yet had any detailed report of its result, he hoped that if official negotiations could be brought about they might lead to a peaceable settlement. He concluded by thanking me for my share and expressed the hope that my services would no longer be needed, now that the official channels had been reopened.

The conversation ended at about 7.30 and at 8 o'clock I went to the Carlton Hotel to meet the seven Englishmen who had taken part in the conference at Sönke Nissen Koog on 7th August. Everybody was in a good humour and we sat down to eat our dinner with the feeling that the great problem might now be solved.

Nevertheless we decided that I ought to try to get into touch with Goering by telephone and hear what the German government thought of the situation since the discussion with Henderson. I asked the Carlton to put me through to Goering and was told that all telephonic communications with Germany had been broken off. With the aid of the Foreign Office I managed, however, to reach Goering at 10.20. The call was put through to the Chancellery where Goering happened to be. General Bodenschatz answered the telephone. He said that Goering was in conference with Hitler and other members of the government. Goering came to the telephone afterwards. He was very nervous and frankly uneasy about the serious situation. He even said that he was afraid war might break out at any moment. He was emphatic in his expectations of my journey to London and said that he had seen Hitler on Friday morning and exhaustively discussed our Thursday conversation with him. I expressed my surprise over the change which had occurred and asked for a reason. Goering answered indistinctly, but by degrees I understood his meaning. He was alluding to the fact that England had signed the pact with Poland on Friday afternoon. This had taken place in London practically simultaneously with Henderson's visit to Hitler in Berlin, and the latter had taken it as a challenge and a direct announcement that Britain did not desire a peaceful settlement.

I told my English friends the gist of this conversation, and we asked Mr. Roberts, the chief of the Central Department of the Foreign Office, to come to the Carlton, so as to tell the Foreign Office and the government about the position in Berlin. Roberts corroborated the information that the pact with Poland had been signed that day, but expressed his surprise that it should have been so misinterpreted in Berlin, since the signing of it was a self-evident sequel to the promises made by Britain several months ago when her attitude had been clearly defined. Nevertheless Mr. Roberts immediately sent a report in writing of the information received to Halifax.

Owing to all this I changed my plans. I had intended to

go home to Sweden the next morning at 8 a.m. but now I decided to stay in London and see Lord Halifax again.

The atmosphere was full of foreboding in London on that Saturday morning of 26th August. Unmistakable signs of the deterioration of the situation were to be seen everywhere and the general uneasiness had affected even the man in the street. Several of my friends had left London early that morning with their families, expecting a declaration of war at any minute. It was apparent that the Foreign Office officials had worked late into the night, and none of those whom I knew were to be seen until the afternoon. The railway system had been noticeably deranged, owing to partial mobilisation. In the morning I went to meet a friend at King's Cross Station, who, on hearing the alarming news, had hastened from Scotland to London. His train was several hours late like most of the others that day.

At 11 o'clock I succeeded in meeting Lord Halifax in Downing Street; thanks, as far as I can remember, to the good offices of Mr. Roberts. I told him frankly that from my talk with Goering I was obliged to draw the conclusion that the situation was extremely serious. I pointed out that a person in my insignificant position who was also ignorant of many important factors, naturally could not offer any advice, but I maintained that I was absolutely convinced that Goering was the only man in Germany who might be able to prevent a war. I therefore suggested that I should deliver a personal letter to Goering from Halifax which would confirm England's genuine desire to reach a peaceful settlement, and expressed my hope that such a gesture might calm the agitation in Berlin. Lord Halifax talked to Chamberlain for about half an hour and then informed me that the Prime Minister had approved my suggestion and that he, Halifax, would write a personal letter to Goering which I should deliver to him.

This letter from the British Foreign Minister, written at a time when the crisis seemed to be at its apex, has not been mentioned in any of the published official reports. Halifax read it to me; in it he made a frank and friendly assertion of

England's definite wish to come to an understanding with Germany. There could be no doubting the writer's good will.

But time was passing and I had no chance of catching the plane to Amsterdam which left at 1.25. However, the Air Minister, Sir Kingsley Wood, gave orders that it should be detained until I could get to Croydon, and he also arranged with the Dutch government that the plane which had flown Henderson from Berlin and arrived in London about an hour ago, should land at Amsterdam on its way back to pick me up and take me on to Berlin. The ordinary air communications between Holland and Germany were already disconnected. Before I left Downing Street Halifax told me that he hoped that Sir Nevile Henderson, who was on his way from Croydon to Downing Street, would bring some proposals with him which might render possible further negotiations.

My English friends were at an office in Westminster eagerly waiting to hear the result of our talk. I could only take a hasty farewell, and then one of them drove me out to Croydon. Never have I come so swiftly from the centre of London to Croydon, and seldom have I seen anyone make his way through the traffic with such skill and presence of mind as my English friend on that day. At about two o'clock the plane left for Amsterdam.

I was met at Berlin Tempelhof at 7 p.m. by Oberstleutnant Conrad, who gave me a message from Goering that I was to go straight to Karinhall. On arrival there we heard that Goering had just left in his private train *en route* for his secret headquarters not far from Berlin. The car continued to a small station called Friedrichswalde, where the train was waiting and Goering received me. He was very grave and eagerly asked me about the situation in London. He wanted me to tell him exactly what had happened there and describe the British attitude. Before I could do so he also expressed his disappointment over the distrust which the British manifested towards Germany, and again underlined the seriousness of the position which was due to the Polish ill-treatment of the German minorities in Poland.

When I was able to speak I pointed out the British dislike of the German policy and their disbelief of all the German reports of Polish "*Greueltaten.*" I emphasised how important it was that such incidents must on no account be allowed to influence the actions in the precarious state of affairs, and ended up by giving my absolutely candid opinion that there could be no doubt that the entire British government desired to come to a friendly agreement, but with one irrecusable condition, that Germany refrain from any measures which might trouble the peace of Europe. I also vigorously maintained that there could be no question of England failing to respect the agreement with Poland, and supporting the latter country in the event of German aggression.

We had been talking for about an hour, and as yet I had purposely withheld Halifax's letter from Goering. But now I thought that it was time to give it. I handed it over as a proof of the veracity of my statements, and added that he would find that the contents confirmed all my information. I had never seen anyone open a letter quite so quickly and nervously. Goering tore open the envelope, unfolded the letter and began to spell his way through it. He cannot speak English but understands a certain amount. However, the process was too slow for him, and he sprang up, laid the letter before me and said: "Herr Dahlerus! Translate this letter into German and remember how tremendously important it is that every syllable conveys the correct shade of meaning." I translated the letter as exactly as I could, and he listened tensely and attentively. It was obvious that it made a deep impression on him.

He sent for Colonel Conrad and ordered the train to stop at the next station where a car was to be at his, Goering's, disposition to take him back to Berlin. He found the contents of the letter so important that he felt he must instantly discuss them with Hitler.

Since hearing Halifax's letter Goering's temper improved noticeably. We reached a little station, whose name I did not hear, at about 11 p.m. and drove from there to Berlin. During the drive he entertained me with various bits of news. He told

me some details about Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow, explained the consequences of the agreement with Russia, and described the impression made by Stalin on Ribbentrop, who had been greatly overawed; he stressed the friendliness of the atmosphere in which the negotiations had been conducted, and as evidence of this told me that it was the first time Stalin had allowed any official photographs to be taken in the Kremlin. Ribbentrop and Molotov had been photographed in the act of signing the pact in the presence of Stalin, and the pictures had appeared in the Press all over the world. Goering harked back to his old theme of the need for an understanding between Britain and Germany, but he said that he still could not understand the British attitude towards German policy.

At midnight the car stopped at the Chancellery, and a colonel advanced towards us and reported that Hitler had gone to bed. No lights burned in the building, but Goering said that Hitler must be woken up and told the news. He asked me to go to my hotel and wait a little before going to bed, since it was possible that it might be necessary to arrange a conference the same night, though he doubted that it would take place before the next morning.

I went on to the Esplanade Hotel and sat down in the lounge, which was quite empty at that hour. I wondered if my information about the British attitude together with Halifax's letter had really been sufficiently persuasive to help Goering convince Hitler of the need to negotiate and come to an understanding with England. What would Hitler's reaction be when he was disturbed in the middle of the night by Goering and heard his impulsive announcement? I sat for about a quarter of an hour meditating over this. Suddenly two colonels approached, stood to attention in typical German fashion and said: "*Der Führer lässt bitten.*" I followed them and entered a large open car which left at great speed for the Chancellery. Not a word was said by me or either of the adjutants.

CHAPTER VI

HITLER

THE Wilhelmsplatz was full of people, the windows of the huge palace were alight and the metal doorways to the new wing were wide open. The car entered an inner courtyard where the sentries were standing at attention and a number of officials received us. The *mise en scène* rather surprised me: it seemed odd that it could have been staged in such a short time and for such a meeting. It was hardly appropriate to the gravity of the situation and the insignificance of my own person. Some high officials advanced and introduced themselves, but I was far too preoccupied with other matters to make any note of their identity. They accompanied me through the celebrated long gallery in the new wing of the Chancellery to a large waiting-room outside Hitler's study. The waiting-room was furnished in modern German fashion, but the walls were hung with old and famous paintings. The floor was covered with exquisite carpets, and the floral decorations, consisting exclusively of orchids, proclaimed their place of origin, the well-known Berlin firm of Rothe. I found it strange that attention should be paid to such details during the present ominous situation.

Almost at once the door was opened into a smaller narrow anteroom which separated the waiting-room from Hitler's study and I was shown in. Hitler was standing in the middle of the floor in a solemn attitude, staring fixedly at me. Goering stood beside him; he looked pleased with himself. I went forward and said: "*Guten Abend, Excellenz.*" Hitler uttered a few friendly words in reply and asked us to be seated in a corner of the room. He then proceeded to give a long lecture about German policy and Germany's desire to come to an understanding with Britain, without alluding either to Halifax's letter or to my account of the British attitude which he had just heard from Goering. He recapitulated the incidents which had taken place since he became Germany's leader, and

recalled all the difficulties which he had encountered. Several times he emphasised his vain appeals to England for co-operation, and added that he suspected that the British were not inspired by any genuine desire to co-operate. He repeated the observations which he set down later in his letter to Daladier of the same day—27th August—and then began a severe criticism of Britain and the British. Throughout this speech Goering had not uttered a word, and when we reached this point I began to fear that Hitler would go on still longer and that the meeting would come to an end without achieving any result. The whole scene was a typical proof of Hitler's demagogic desire, and a typical specimen of the method he used to force his point of view upon either adversary or interlocutor.

His monologue had lasted for about twenty minutes and he was becoming very much excited, especially when criticising England, when he paused for a moment and I could not help interrupting to say that I regretted that I could not share his opinion of Great Britain and her people. "I lived as a working-man in England for some time and I know all classes of Englishmen." Hitler interposed at once: "What's that? You have worked as a common labourer in England? Tell me about it." He quite forgot his political exposition and we began a long discussion about England, exchanging questions and answers as though we were ordinary people enjoying a normal conversation. I stressed my great respect for the British working-man, the British citizen and the British people in general. I related several incidents of my life in England as proof of the people's good qualities; their endurance, their stubbornness when striving after a goal, and their self-evident qualifications to share as citizens of a great nation in the reconstruction and settlement of Europe. Hitler questioned me eagerly and remarked that anyhow there were a great many inept plutocrats in England. I merely replied that this was not peculiar to England but could be found in every country, including Germany. The discussion continued for at least half an hour. I began to feel more confident, for here was a man whose real knowledge of

Britain was nil, but who got all his information from the mainly unfavourable reports which he received from his "counsellors." I concluded by expressing my conviction that if Hitler had the opportunity of obtaining a personal and thorough acquaintanceship with the British Empire and its people, there would be no chance of a collision between England and Germany and that if he had a deeper knowledge of the British mentality there would be every hope of collusion.

Then Hitler returned to the topical questions. He became excited, stood up, paced to and fro, while describing his interview with Henderson; there was no denying his eloquence. He had a seductive way of putting his own viewpoint in the most favourable light, but he suffered from a lamentable incapacity to see or respect the other party's point of view. After commenting on his proposals to Henderson, he ended by gesticulating and saying: "*Dies ist mein letztes grosszügiges Angebot an England.*" (This is my last magnanimous offer to England.) He continued by underlining the superior armed might of Great Germany. While doing so his face stiffened and his movements became very peculiar.

He sounded very arrogant and overbearing while he described the armed might which his leadership had created, declaring that he personally had studied in detail all the technical and strategic questions of decisive importance; he maintained that Berlin's anti-aircraft defences alone were as strong as those of the entire British Empire, and that his air force was unconquerable. Goering, who had sat listening in respectful silence, giggled contentedly as he heard his Leader commending his own Service. Hitler now went on to say that the army possessed an equipment unequalled in history; a German infantry company had no resemblance to an infantry company in the ordinary sense of the word; it was equipped with anti-tank guns, small quickfiring guns and effective machine-guns, that it was in general such a well-designed fighting unit that it could be used for the most varied tasks of attack and defence. In company with all the other branches of the service the infantry had been subjected to an extraordinary training, in which the heads of the

German Wehrmacht had applied the principle of economy in human material, above all teaching the individual soldier not to expose himself unnecessarily to the risk of becoming a casualty. He spoke of the armoured divisions and how his cars were so strongly protected that the anti-tank guns of an enemy could not pierce their armour. No British or French tank, on the other hand, could resist the German anti-tank weapons. His fleet, he admitted, was inferior to the British Navy, but his submarine service was so powerful that the German Navy was superior to all others. He showed a surprising grasp of detail here, producing figures to show the thickness of the deck armour of different types of British ships, explaining that he had ordered the Luftwaffe to be supplied with bombs capable of penetrating the thickest of these decks. It was clear that Hitler was riding his favourite hobby-horse and that he was excessively well informed concerning the most minute details of the German forces.

When at last he had finished his lecture on Germany's well-equipped army, navy and air force, I replied that I was convinced that Germany had achieved a very comprehensive rearmament during the past few years, but one should not close one's eyes to the fact that other great powers had followed the same course. After all there had been a world war not so long ago which must have taught other countries a lesson as well. Besides, England and France were indisputably in a position effectively to blockade Germany. The war of 1914–1918 had shown that even if they took their time about it, these two powers were capable of carrying through a rearmament in no way inferior to that of Germany. Nor should one forget that the British Empire had its headquarters on islands which were inaccessible to attack by a country with an inferior fleet. Thus, while she was protected by the Royal Navy from invasion England was in a position to rearm and prepare herself with that tough endurance so typical of the British race, a thing which Germany, despite her experiences in the last war, had begun to forget.

Hitler listened without interrupting me. I spoke slowly and quietly to avoid irritating him unnecessarily, since his

mental equilibrium was patently unstable. He seemed to ponder what I said, but then suddenly got up, and becoming very much excited and nervous, walked up and down saying, as though to himself, that Germany was irresistible and could defeat her adversaries by means of a rapid war. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the room and stood there staring. His voice was blurred and his behaviour that of a completely abnormal person. He spoke in staccato phrases, and it was clear that his thoughts were concentrated on the tasks which awaited him in case of war. "If there should be war," he said, "*dann werde ich U-boote bauen, U-boote bauen, U-boote, U-boote, U-boote.*" His voice became more indistinct and finally one could not follow him at all. Then he pulled himself together, raised his voice as though addressing a large audience and shrieked: "*Ich werde Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge, Flugzeuge, und ich werde meine Feinde vernichten.*" He seemed more like a phantom from a story book than a real person. I stared at him in amazement and turned to see how Goering was reacting, but he did not turn a hair. It flashed across my brain: 'Here is the man who holds not only the fate of his own people in his hand, but whose actions can influence a whole continent, the state of a whole world, the weal or woe of millions of people, who can decide whether humanity should go forward in peace with all its blessings, or whether a war is to break out with all its horrors. This is the man whom so many have described to me as fascinating.'

Undoubtedly Hitler possessed great talent, but it was a talent with catastrophic gaps in it—above all where morals were concerned. From the beginning I realised clearly that he was absolutely incalculable and utterly unscrupulous, spurred on by a boundless fanaticism. I realised also that settled world conditions were unthinkable if everything depended on this man who was directed or influenced by inferior personalities headed by Ribbentrop. And had Goering the immovable determination needful to combat these followers of the policy of violence? Was he himself convinced of the necessity for peace, was he prepared for the sake of peace to risk everything, his authority, if need be his position and his life?

Hitler continued as though in a trance: "War doesn't frighten me, encirclement of Germany is an impossibility, my people admire and follow me faithfully. If privations lie ahead of the German people, I shall be the first to starve and set my people a good example. It will spur them to superhuman efforts." His eyes were glassy, his voice unnatural as he went on: "If there should be no butter, I shall be the first to stop eating butter, eating butter. My German people will loyally and gladly do the same." He paused, his glance wandered and he said, "If the enemy can hold out for several years, I, with my power over the German people, can hold out one year longer. Thereby I know that I am superior to all the others."

He began to pace up and down again, came close up to me, stopped, and said: "Herr Dahlerus, you who know England so well, can you give me any reason for my perpetual failure to come to an agreement with her?" He was still agitated, and I hesitated to give an honest answer. Then I began to speak very quietly and distinctly so as to underline by my severity the honesty and accuracy of my reply. "Your Excellency, with my comprehensive knowledge of the English people, their mentality, and their attitude towards Germany, I must definitely assure you that I am absolutely convinced that these difficulties are founded on a lack of confidence in you personally and in your government." Hitler flung out his right arm, smiting his breast with his left hand, and exclaimed: "*Idioten, habe ich je in meinem Leben eine Unwahrheit gesagt?*" ("Idiots! Have I ever told a lie in my life?") I pointed out to him that the position was probably the same in major politics as it was in the business world, namely that a satisfactory agreement could only be based on mutual confidence; if this were lacking, with or without justification, then it must be created or restored.

Hitler walked backwards and forwards in his great study, pulled up and pointed at me: "You, Herr Dahlerus, you have heard my side. You must go to England at once and tell it to the British government. I do not think that Henderson understood me, and I really want to bring about an under-

standing." I replied that being a private individual I could not undertake to travel to England on his behalf, but if the British government expressed a wish that I should come and tell them of our conversation, I was prepared to do so. Nevertheless if this were to be I must have a clear definition of the vital points on which a settlement could be reached. I stressed that I would be of no use if I went to England and gave a general account of what had been said to-day: I must have the points clearly defined so that I was thoroughly *au fait* with them. I was accustomed to that when concluding agreements with other business men, and if clarity were necessary under those circumstances, it was still more so now, when the peace of the world was at stake. I had already heard Hitler's version of his talk with Henderson, but now I wanted to put a number of questions in order fully to grasp the vital points contained in that proposal. I remember saying: "As an example may I say that it is scarcely possible for me to present your proposals if I do not have a clear notion of your conception of your proposed corridor to Danzig."

When I said this Hitler smiled, the only time I ever, now or later, saw him do so. He turned to Goering and said, "Well, Henderson never asked about that." This gave me a chance to emphasise how important it was, *if* I should go to England, that I should have the most correct and exact information with me. Goering took an atlas, tore out a page and with a red pencil outlined the territory to which Germany aspired. Then we went on to discuss the vital points contained in the proposal which Hitler had presented to Henderson to be forwarded to the British government. During our conversation Hitler became excited and verbose, and it was not so easy to get the gist of what he said. However, by degrees we did so. Finally a clear, concise message was produced, so that I knew exactly what to say in London. Already when I had given Halifax's letter to Goering the latter had warned me not to carry any notes on my person about the important questions which were under debate, and so I refrained from writing anything down. Instead I memorised Hitler's proposals, point by point. I reproduce them here as I under-

stood them, and after each point I shall indicate how they compare with the proposals published at the same date.

(1) Germany desired a pact or alliance with Great Britain, which would mean that all disputes of a political or economic nature should be eliminated by virtue of this pact.

(Compare with the introduction to Hitler's communication to Sir N. Henderson on 29th August as given in Great Britain's Blue Book, document 68, page 120.[1] Compare also British reply in the Blue Book document No. 74, para. 2 (page 126), where the expressions a "general understanding" and "to reach agreement" appear.[2])

(2) England was to help Germany to obtain Danzig and the Corridor, with the exception of a free harbour in Danzig which was to be at the disposal of Poland. Poland should also have a corridor to Gdynia, retain the whole of Gdynia and an adequate territory around it.

(Corresponds to a single phrase in Hitler's communication,

[1] "By way of introduction the Führer declared that the British Ambassador had given expression at the close of the last conversation to the hope that, after all, an understanding between Germany and England might yet be possible. He (the Führer) had therefore turned things over in his mind once more and desired to make a move as regards England which should be as decisive as the move as regards Russia which had led to the recent agreement. Yesterday's sitting in the House of Commons and the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also moved the Führer to talk once more to the British Ambassador. The assertion that Germany affected to conquer the world was ridiculous. The British Empire embraced 40 million square kilometres, Russia 19 million square kilometres, America 9½ million square kilometres, whereas Germany embraced less than 600,000 square kilometres. It is quite clear who it is who desires to conquer the world."

[2] 2. The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions: those which are the matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connection with these last, His Majesty's government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British government for a general understanding. These proposals are, of course, stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty's government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

Blue Book No. 68, para. 3, first sentence.[1] Compare British answer, No. 74, para. 3.[2])

(3) Germany pledged herself to guarantee Poland's boundaries.

(Corresponds to nothing in Hitler's communication. Compare British answer in Blue Book, No. 74, para. 4, "the[3]

[1] "3. The problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved."

[2] 3. The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Germany and Poland. As to that, His Majesty's government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of the settlement and the method by which it is to be reached. On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent, and His Majesty's government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress. The German government will be aware that His Majesty's government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not, for any advantage offered to Great Britain, acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a State to whom they have given their guarantee.

[3] 4. In the opinion of His Majesty's government a reasonable solution of the differences between Germany and Poland could and should be effected by agreement between the two countries on lines which would include the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests, and they recall that in his speech of the 28th April last the German Chancellor recognised the importance of these interests to Poland.

But, as was stated by the Prime Minister in his letter to the German Chancellor of the 22nd August, His Majesty's Government consider it essential for the success of the discussions which would precede the agreement that it should be understood beforehand that any settlement arrived at would be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's government would be ready if desired to make their contribution to the effective operation of such a guarantee.

In the view of His Majesty's government it follows that the next step should be the initiation of direct discussions between the German and Polish governments on a basis which would include the principles stated above, namely, the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests and the securing of the settlement by an international guarantee.

They have already received a definite assurance from the Polish government that they are prepared to enter into discussions on this basis, and His Majesty's government hope the German government would for their part also be willing to agree to this course.

If, as His Majesty's government hope, such discussion led to agreement the way would be open to the negotiation of that wider and more complete understanding between Great Britain and Germany which both countries desire.

safeguarding of Poland's essential interests," "guaranteed by other Powers" "by an international guarantee.")

(4) An agreement should be reached about Germany's colonies. Germany wished to have these returned to her, or a settlement regarding colonies belonging to the British Empire, which Germany could receive as compensation. Germany required certain tropical territories to provide her with raw materials or foodstuffs which were vital for the industry and the feeding of her people.

(Hitler's communication, No. 68, para. 1, page 121.[1])

(5) Adequate guarantees should be made for the treatment of the German minority in Poland.

(Corresponds to nothing in Hitler's communication (Blue Book, No. 68), but is clearly expressed in the German message to Henderson of 31.8.39, Blue Book, pp. 152–153, No. 98, paras. 13 and 14.[2])

[1] "(1) His colonial demands which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods are fulfilled and in this case he is prepared to fix the longest time limit."

[2] (13) Since the government of the German Reich has the most vehement complaints to make against the Polish treatment of minorities, and since the Polish government for their part feel obliged to make complaints against Germany, both parties declare their agreement to have these complaints laid before an international committee of inquiry, whose task would be to examine all complaints as regards economic or physical damage, and any other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake to make good economic or other damage done to minorities on either side since the year 1918, or to cancel expropriation as the case may be, or to provide complete compensation to the persons affected for this and any other encroachments on their economic life;

(14) In order to free the Germans who may be left in Poland and the Poles who may be left in Germany from the feeling of being outlawed by all nations, and in order to render them secure against being called upon to perform action or to render services incompatible with their national sentiments, Germany and Poland agree to guarantee the rights of both minorities by means of the most comprehensive and binding agreement, in order to guarantee to these minorities the preservation, the free development and practical application of their nationality (Volkstum), and in particular to permit for this purpose such organisation as they may consider necessary. Both parties undertake not to call upon members of the minority for military service,

(6) Germany pledged herself to defend the British Empire with the German Wehrmacht wherever the former might be attacked.

(Hitler's communication, Blue Book, No. 68, page 121.[1])

This last point was the subject of much discussion. Hitler pointed out how important it would be for Great Britain to know that wherever the Empire risked attack, Germany would come to her assistance. Nor was this all. Germany pledged herself not to support any nation whatsoever which might come into conflict with the British Empire.

Throughout the conversation, which had lasted several hours, Goering had merely contributed a few brief words to underline some utterance of Hitler, but now he joined in and pointed out that this latter clause would also mean that Germany would support England against Italy, if they should ever come into conflict with one another over Mediterranean or any other interests. On my side I merely requested more exact details now and again, and on several occasions tried to lead the discussion back to the fundamental points. Hitler was very much excited and tried to make me see what it would mean if these conditions should be carried out. Goering sat beside him looking very satisfied. He was in an excellent humour, although his strictly formal and obsequious behaviour towards his chief surprised me and gave me food for thought.

After the conclusion of the discussion proper I once more stressed the importance that I should be fully cognisant of all the details, and I also declared that my possible visit to

[1] "(3) He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Führer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as has already been emphasised, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but also if necessary an assurance to the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary. The Führer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which corresponds to the new political situation, and which is economically tolerable. Finally, the Führer renewed his assurances that he is not interested in Western problems and that a frontier modification in the West does not enter into consideration. Western fortifications which have been constructed at a cost of milliards were final Reich frontier on the West."

London could bear fruit only if I were invited by the British government and fetched in a British plane. Here Goering left the room for a moment. When he came back he declared in his eager, impulsive way that something must be done about this, for it was of the most vital importance that this discussion should be communicated to the British government. "You know how much depends upon it, Herr Dahlerus," he said, following me out of the room after I had taken farewell of Hitler.

In the anteroom an adjutant came and told Goering that the arrangements had been made. A German plane would be ready to leave at 8 a.m. and orders had been given to the authorities to get into touch with the Dutch government to obtain a permit for the plane to go over Holland and to prevent any incidents while over Dutch territory.

On returning to my hotel I rang up Charles Spencer who immediately contacted Sir Kingsley Wood. It was not long before I got a telephone call from Spencer saying that I was welcome as a messenger, but that there was no time to send over a British plane. However there would be nothing against my arriving in a German one and arrangements were being made to receive it at Croydon aerodrome. It was now 4.30 a.m. but I had no thought of bed. I packed my bags and rang up the banker Wettermark to tell him that I was going to England that morning, but hoped soon to be back again. At 7.40 I left the Esplanade and drove out to Tempelhof. The plane left as soon as I was on board. The chief pilot kindly invited me to sit forward in the cockpit so as to see something of the navigation; I declined his invitation, for all my thoughts were concentrated on my mission. The morning was fine and the air clear; we flew low and had a good view of the landscape. Everything was so peaceful in the late summer light; there was a Sunday atmosphere about the towns and villages as we passed over them.

It was not twentyhours since I had left London, but much had happened since then. Was I a pawn in a game of intrigue, or were the messages I bore sent in good faith? I recapitulated and analysed every detail of the events since my arrival in

Berlin, trying to get a clear picture of what was truth and reality and what could be sly trickery.

I thought I could feel fairly sure that Goering, for some reason or other, was working for a peaceful settlement. He had told me enough about the state of affairs to give me cause to believe that he could be counted upon to support any measures calculated to prevent a policy of force in the present situation.

But Hitler? From the moment I set eyes on him I felt uneasy. My reception in the Chancellery seemed unnatural, as did Hitler's attitude when I came into the room. I had not seen a trace of the extraordinary fascination which he was popularly supposed to exercise upon everyone. From the very beginning of our conversation I had resented his manner towards Goering, his most intimate friend and comrade from the years of struggle. His desire to dominate was explicable, but to require such obsequious humility as Goering now exhibited from his closest collaborator, seemed to me excessively repellent and unprepossessing.

The harangue which Hitler made during the first twenty minutes of my call, when as I have just related he recapitulated Germany's foreign policy and especially her situation *vis-à-vis* Great Britain throughout the past years, gave proof of remarkable eloquence and a seductive turn of argument when presenting his viewpoints, but also of a terrifying lack of knowledge and understanding of the opposing party's attitude. His successes in Germany's internal conflicts had accustomed him to getting his own way, fulfilling his own demands and breaking down all opposition.

Now he made the great mistake of using the same methods when dealing with other nations. When criticising Great Britain he used catch phrases and banal propaganda nonsense which had no relation to true facts. The essential discontent in his nature emerged very clearly and it was coupled with great stubbornness and lack of stability when he had to make up his mind. On the other hand he reacted very definitely to my account of how I had lived in England as a working-man, and the interest with which he listened to my experiences

there during those twelve years, indicated a thirst for knowledge. I also noticed that his suspicion of me personally seemed to disappear when he got an impression of the intimate contact which I had had with workers in different European countries. But I could not make up my mind if he were honest when he related his conversation with Henderson and presented his proposals for a settlement with Great Britain. When he talked about the war, with staring eyes and twisted mouth, repeating "*U-boote, U-boote, Flugzeuge, Flugzeuge, Flugzeuge,*" I realised that I was dealing with a person who could not be considered normal. It was the same when he alluded to the hardships of war and said that he would starve as an example to his people and thereby compel the German nation to superhuman achievement.

CHAPTER VII

LONDON AND BERLIN
27TH—29TH AUGUST

WHEN we landed at Croydon Aerodrome at 12.20 p.m. the place seemed dead—civilian traffic between England and the Continent had come to a standstill and the field was closed to the public. In the circumstances the arrival of a German plane quite naturally caused something of a sensation. The English delegates to the conference at Sönke Nissen Koog came up to meet me together with a crowd of other people, and the minute I stepped out of the plane they gathered about me in a compact ring so as to prevent outsiders from seeing us or taking photographs. I was escorted to one of the rooms in the Croydon administrative building and requested to give an account of my visit to Berlin. I immediately dictated a rather slapdash report to an inexperienced typist who did not know shorthand and had to take it straight down on her machine.

As soon as the report was finished it was dispatched by special courier to Lord Halifax. Several of my friends then went off in the large car which was waiting outside the main entrance to the aerodrome surrounded by curious onlookers. The head of the aerodrome and I sneaked out by a back way to a small two-seater, in which we escaped unseen and drove to a private office in Westminster. From there I was sent by taxi to the Foreign Office, and thence whisked through back streets to Number 10 Downing Street, where I was immediately received in the Cabinet Room by Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary of State. The three statesmen were grave, but perfectly calm. Chamberlain asked me to tell him what had happened during my visit to Berlin and I proceeded to give an exhaustive account of my conversation of the previous night with Hitler, stressing the six points. As I spoke I sensed that my audience was sceptical: on several points my report

differed from that of Sir Nevile Henderson. Chamberlain asked me if I was absolutely certain that I had understood what Hitler had said. I could only reply that my command of the German language was such that a misinterpretation of Hitler's words on that count was out of the question; further, our conversation was so calm and each question was discussed so thoroughly that I could assure Chamberlain that my report was an accurate reproduction of what actually was said. However, I could not, of course, answer for the accuracy of what Hitler had told me or guarantee that he had given the same story to me as to Henderson.

What an immense difference there was between the atmosphere of my discussion with the three Englishmen and that of the nocturnal meeting in Berlin! No bombast, no outbursts of oratory, only calm, well-turned phrases. There was, however, one point of similarity: distrust. Chamberlain's remarks, in particular, were tinged with a deep-rooted lack of confidence in Hitler and Nazi Germany, but also with an absolutely unequivocal determination to try to avert a catastrophe. When he asked me what impression Hitler had made on me, I refused to give a direct reply. However, I did say: "I shouldn't like to have him as a partner in my business." That was the only time I saw Chamberlain smile during the discussions of those momentous times.

Since the British ministers and diplomats were dubious about my interpretation of the German demands and since I felt intuitively that it would be of incalculable value if the German government were to be informed of the British reaction to their proposals before the British reply to the message transmitted by Henderson was formulated, I now made the following suggestion: if the British government had confidence in me, it could inform me of its reaction to the German views presented by me and could give me permission to return to Berlin immediately, to inform Hitler and judge his reaction. Chamberlain told me that the British government had agreed to send Henderson to Berlin with the English reply on that very day, Sunday the 27th of August. I took the liberty of suggesting that Henderson should not leave until

the following day, so that I could report to the British government after my arrival in Berlin and before the British reply to the official German note was prepared, tell them exactly how Hitler reacted to Britain's firm stand. Chamberlain asked me if I were willing to take the responsibility for Henderson's remaining in London until the Monday. I could only reply that naturally I could take no such responsibility, but that I was willing to try to telephone to Goering in Berlin immediately, inform him of my proposal and ask him point-blank if the German government would agree to it. Chamberlain in his quiet way then asked me if I intended to telephone Berlin from the Foreign Office. I replied that that was exactly my intention. He agreed, and I made my call from Sir Alexander Cadogan's room there. Goering said he could not answer immediately, first he would have to confer with Hitler. I telephoned him again half an hour later and he informed me that Hitler had accepted the proposal on the condition that it was genuine. On hearing this, Chamberlain decided that Henderson should remain in London, and that I should leave for Berlin the same evening for a conference with Hitler as soon as the British proposals had been drawn up.

I went with Cadogan to his room in the Foreign Office to continue the discussion. I had never met him before, and at first he was, naturally enough, rather reserved with me, picking his words carefully. Gradually, however, he realised how I felt about things, and I remember that he summed up England's attitude in the phrase: "This gangster policy will have to cease." Britain would have to formulate her demands and proposals so as to put a stop to Hitler's advance along the road leading to disaster for the whole of Europe.

Several times Cadogan was called out by Chamberlain and Halifax, and after I, too, had had a couple of brief conversations with them, Cadogan informed me of the views of the British government on the six points, and gave me a lucid, factual explanation of the reasons for its decision.

With regard to Point 1, England was in principle willing to come to an agreement with Germany that would assure a peaceable solution of the political and economic problems,

but it was emphasised that the details of such a solution must be the subject of special negotiation.

As far as Danzig and the Corridor were concerned, the British government was agreeable to a solution of the problem and recommended that the German and Polish governments begin negotiations immediately in order to settle the matter once and for all.

Concerning Point 3 (the guarantees of Poland's boundaries), the British government considered that, in view of the events of the last few years, it was unable to accept the solution suggested by the Germans. It recommended, instead, that Poland's borders be guaranteed by Russia, Germany, Italy, France and England jointly.

Regarding Point 4 (satisfactory guarantees for the German minority in Poland), England was ready to accept the German demands, and recommended that this question be decided by negotiation direct with Poland.

The demand in Point 5 that Germany's former colonies be restored to her was rejected by the British government, which also refused to discuss the question at this time. Cadogan declared frankly that under the obvious threat implied by Germany's mobilization no British government would dare to suggest to Parliament that Germany's old colonies be returned or that other colonial territory be awarded to her. Parliament would never consent to decide such a question at the point of a gun. The British government agreed, however, that if other problems were solved and Germany demobilised, the matter would immediately be taken up for consideration and stated that it would be handled speedily and without prejudice.

Germany's offer in Point 6 to defend the British Empire "*mit der Wehrmacht des Grossdeutschen Reiches wo immer es auch angegriffen werden könnte*" was rejected most emphatically. To accept such an "offer" would hardly be compatible with the policy of the British Empire; nor would it serve its interests.

Cadogan went on to say that my trip must be arranged with the utmost discretion so that no one should know who I was or what I was about and therefore I could not take the

risk of leaving from Croydon. To this end the German plane had been flown to Heston, a smaller aerodrome, from which I would take off for Berlin.

Cadogan's talk with me was frank and to the point, I was impressed with the calm purposeful manner with which he discussed these momentous questions. I made mental notes of everything he said, but wrote nothing down as I dared not risk carrying papers that might fall into the wrong hands.

Cadogan and I finally decided that as soon as I had conferred with Hitler and had seen his reaction I should go straight to Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, Counsellor to the British Embassy in Berlin or to Mr. Holman, also of the Embassy, and report on the German viewpoint so that one or other of them could immediately inform the British government of the results of my mission, preferably before Monday morning. Cadogan wrote down Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes's and Mr. Holman's names on a sheet of official Foreign Office stationery and gave it to me. This was the only written note I had with me on my trip back to Germany—and my only means of proving my bona fides to the British diplomats in Berlin. I was then smuggled out of the Foreign Office through a back door, where two of my friends met me, and the three of us went off to Heston. At 7 o'clock in the evening we set off on the return trip to Berlin.

Before leaving the Foreign Office I telephoned to Goering to confirm that I was leaving for Berlin by plane at 7 p.m. He seemed to think this was rather late. It would be dark and he was worried lest my plane be shot at by the British or over German territory. He asked me to hold the line and a minute later came back and gave me a concise description of the route the plane must follow over Germany to avoid being shot at. He also assured me that the anti-aircraft stations along our course would be informed that we were coming. This may seem an insignificant point, but to me it was clearly indicative of Goering's interest in the matter: all difficulties, obstacles and risks must be eliminated so as to smooth the way for a successful conclusion of the negotiations.

As we flew from London to Berlin, I speculated on the

impression the British attitude would make on the German government. It seemed to me that every other country would have acted in exactly the same way under the circumstances and would have made the same reply as England was now doing. Reduced to its essentials, the question was a simple one: would it be possible to make Hitler aware both of England's sincere desire to reach a peaceable solution and of her unfaltering determination not to tolerate any policy of aggression? I was tormented by uncertainty. I tried to prepare myself and to plan how I should best explain the British attitude, how I should manage to make the German government appreciate how just and right it was.

At about 11 o'clock on Sunday evening the plane landed at Tempelhof. A car was waiting for us and without wasting a second I was driven at top speed to Goering's residence in Berlin. By ten minutes past eleven on the evening of Sunday the 27th I was with him. I was relieved to find him in a good mood, and I went straight to the point "*Herr Generalfeldmarschall*, if my mission is to serve any purpose, it is essential that you realise that every word I say is the exact truth, that the report I am going to make to you is correct, and that my views on the reply are entirely based on my desire to characterise the situation objectively and factually. Never before have I carried on a conversation with such a deep sense of responsibility and I beg you to respect what I have to say. If Herr Hitler's desire to reach an agreement with England, as clearly expressed by him at our conference last night, is to be fulfilled, it is essential that he be made to understand England's point of view."

After assuring Goering that I was personally convinced that England—her government and her people—truly desired peace, that she was acting in genuine good faith, but was equally determined not to accept a decision in Europe based on a policy of violence, I proceeded to give him the response of the British government to the six points. Goering raised a few objections and rubbed his big nose. He regarded the British reply as hardly satisfactory and the whole situation as highly precarious. Again we went over the British proposal

point by point and by degrees he began to show more understanding of England's attitude. Finally he declared that he, personally, quite appreciated what Britain felt, but that he doubted if Hitler would do the same.

The conversation ended by Goering deciding that he thought it wisest for him to confer with Hitler alone. He would immediately inform me if my presence was required or if the discussion turned out satisfactorily. He therefore left for the Chancellery and I went to my hotel.

I felt worried and insecure. Had I neglected to advance any argument that might have better illustrated the British viewpoint? What would Hitler's answer be? I paced the floor nervously, as I waited impatiently for news. At 1.30 the telephone rang. As soon as I heard Goering's voice, I understood that he had been successful.

Goering informed me that Hitler respected Britain's views. Hitler, he said, welcomed England's desire to reach a peaceful agreement with Germany, but he wondered if the British wanted the agreement to take the form of a treaty or of a pact (*Vertrag oder Bündnis*). The *Reichskanzler* would be very pleased to see Germany and Great Britain united in a real pact. He respected England's decision to stick to her guarantee of Poland's boundaries and also the British insistence on an international guarantee in this question by five great powers. He accepted England's proposal that the question of the Corridor and Danzig be settled through direct negotiation between Germany and Poland. I breathed a sigh of relief when I heard that Hitler made no objections to an international guarantee and that he was agreeable to negotiation between Germany and Poland. If Hitler was willing to approve the international guarantee, this surely must mean that he had shelved any other plans he might have had *vis-à-vis* Poland.

Hitler had further accepted the British government's proposal to postpone the colonial question until general demobilisation had been carried through and the situation had returned to normal; he had also expressed his conviction that the British would do their best to reach a satisfactory

solution of the problem. He had made no comments on the British rejection of Germany's offer of military support to the British Empire. Goering concluded by saying: "On the condition that the note delivered to-morrow by Henderson corresponds with the report you have given us of the attitude of the British government, there is no reason to suppose that we will not be able to reach an agreement. However, Hitler does not want the note Henderson is bringing to be made public until the German government has seen it. If minor changes are found desirable, it will be better to have them made before publishing the note. Hitler also wants to have the note withheld from Parliament until he has conferred with Henderson." Goering wound up by saying that Hitler did not wish any mention to be made in the note of Roosevelt's message or of the American attitude to the matter. I promised to convey Hitler's views to the British Embassy without delay, and our conversation came to an end.

This was much better than I had dared to hope, and I immediately telephoned the Embassy to speak to Sir George Forbes. It was now about a quarter to two, and Forbes had gone home. However, I spoke to Mr. Holman, who seemed surprised but gave me Forbes's private number. When I finally got hold of Forbes—he had been in bed asleep—I realised that the Foreign Office telegram announcing my arrival had not reached him. He seemed astounded at my request that he come immediately to the Embassy, but finally agreed, and shortly after 2 o'clock on the 28th of August, Forbes and I met at the Embassy.

My reception was formal but not unfriendly. Forbes looked profoundly sceptical when I informed him that I had arrived from London a couple of hours ago. All I could do was to begin at the beginning and tell Forbes what it was all about and who I was. He sat watching me as if he were listening with a certain sardonic pleasure to an unusually tall story, until a few minutes before 3 o'clock Holman rushed in with the news that a code telegram had just come in from the Foreign Office, and that the name Dahlerus was mentioned in it, but that it had not yet been completely decoded. This

broke the ice, and Forbes and I were able to reach a state of mutual confidence that later grew into a firm personal friendship. I informed Forbes in detail of everything that Goering had told me. He made notes of what I had to say for his telegraphic report to London and now and then asked for more details on various points. At 5.30 I left the Embassy, went back to my hotel, took a quick refreshing bath, threw my clothes on again and went down to my car. We drove off at top speed through the town headed for Goering's headquarters. Where this was I did not know, but we passed through Potsdam and on into the country. Soon the car turned up a side-road through a lonely grove of beeches, and suddenly we saw Goering's private train waiting on a provisional track concealed among the trees.

Goering was in fine fettle. He received me immediately, clad in a poisonous green dressing-gown fastened around his middle with a jewelled buckle. He put his hands on his hips, laughed and said: "You haven't had much sleep since I last saw you. You didn't leave the Embassy until 5.30." He asked me if I had had breakfast, and when I replied that I had not he asked me when I did my eating and sleeping. Before we got down to business he told me that the Embassy had been exceedingly surprised and suspicious when I telephoned so late at night. The staff were convinced that I was an adventurer or *Hochstapler* (a big-time swindler).

Quite obviously the German information service left nothing to be desired as far as efficiency was concerned. When I next met Forbes I warned him most seriously, and told him that we must assume that our conversations certainly would be recorded. He replied that the British Embassy had been thoroughly inspected by English electricians and technicians who were certain that no microphone had been installed. I then became suspicious of one of the Embassy hall porters, a German, who had been on the premises when I made my nocturnal visit. He was obviously one of the many who had been drawn into the web of espionage so skilfully organised by Himmler.

Goering was delighted to hear that Forbes had carefully

noted the German response and passed it to London. I also talked to several of Goering's closest assistants who apparently lived on the train. Among them I met Körner, the Secretary of State, General Milch, General Udet, Goering's chief of staff General Jeschonek, Goering's personal adjutant Ministerialrat Görnert, Lieutenant-Colonel Conrad, and, as far as I remember, General Bodenschatz. They all seemed to be of the opinion ostensibly held by Goering himself that war should be avoided, and they evinced great interest in my negotiations.

Goering, who had been dressing, came to us and asked me to accompany him to a large table standing in a clearing next to the train in the shade of several large beeches. The table was spread with maps of Poland and neighbouring German territory. Goering gave me a long-winded survey of the strategic situation and tried to make me understand how unreasonable it was to suspect that the German plans for Danzig and the Corridor would mean an encirclement of Polish territory. The positions of the German divisions were clearly marked on the map. Excitedly Goering showed me where the fighting would take place if war broke out. He kept on trying to convince me that Danzig and the Corridor were of no importance in the general strategy and that even if Germany had this territory it would mean no real weakening of Poland's military situation. He also expressed the hope that the negotiations would soon be concluded and the crisis averted. The situation was very delicate, he said, now that the Polish army was ready to march and now that German mobilisation was complete. Goering went on to describe his headquarters; he told me that quarters for his staff had been blasted out of a cliff right next to the train and that all conceivable measures had been taken to counteract attacks from the air and prevent sabotage.

Later Goering told me how happy he was that the chances of an agreement with England seemed so good, and he emphasised the benefits that collaboration would bring to the two countries in the future. He then repeated his conversation of the previous night with Hitler and stressed that by conceding

to certain points Hitler had proved that his aim was peace and international co-operation. I led the conversation round to Ribbentrop, Himmler and Goebbels in the hope of learning something of their views, but Goering refused the bait. However, I received the definite impression that there was a battle of wills going on between Goering on the one hand and other members of the government on the other. All I could get out of Goering were a few general statements that confirmed my suspicion that the relationship between him and Ribbentrop was certainly not of the most cordial. Goering concluded by emphasising the significance of Germany undertaking not to support any power, including Italy, Russia and Japan, in a conflict with England. This point had once more been made in his conversation with Hitler of the previous night. He asked me expressly to make sure that this factor was stressed as strongly as possible in Forbes's report. I immediately telephoned to Forbes and told him this, and he promised to pass on my message to London.

I then returned to Berlin. The first thing I did was to call on the Swedish Minister, Arvid Richert, to inform him of my recent activities. We had known each other for years, but Richert told me some time afterwards that at first he found it very difficult to believe my story. He quite agreed with me that the Swedish government should be informed of what I knew, and I therefore dictated a memorandum on the negotiations up to that time. My report was taken to Stockholm by a member of the Legation staff on the 29th of August, was received by Boheman, the Under-Secretary of State, the same day and immediately passed on to the Premier and the Foreign Minister.

Later in the afternoon I called on Forbes at the British Embassy, where I found him busy decoding the cables from London giving the text of the British note. He could not, of course, tell me what the cables contained, but he said: "Dahlerus, I am a happy *Botschaftsrat.*" He was in excellent spirits and was impatiently awaiting Henderson's return to Berlin.

I dined with Richert at the Swedish Legation and then

went back to my hotel to wait for news of the result of Henderson's return and of his visit to Hitler. Goering had told me that the meeting was expected to take place at 10.30 in the evening. Words fail to describe my state of mind. Keyed up to top pitch, I paced my room, feverishly comparing the consequences of a peaceful outcome with the frightful fate that awaited Europe and the whole world if war could not be avoided. The clock struck 12 and still no news. Not until 1.15 a.m. on Tuesday the 29th August did the telephone bell ring. Colonel Conrad was calling from the Chancellery to tell me that Hitler, with Ribbentrop at his side, had just received Henderson, that they had had a long discussion, that Henderson's version corresponded in every detail with the preliminary statement of the British government's views, and that the prospects of a peaceful settlement were of the best. I was to report to Goering at 10.50 that morning for further information.

At that moment I was a very happy man. The news could not have been better. I telephoned my wife in Djursholm, outside Stockholm, and asked her to inform Hansson of what had happened.

Early on Tuesday morning I telephoned my friend Wettermark, the banker, and asked him to come to see me. During breakfast in my room I gave him a summary of the situation. At 10 o'clock I called on Forbes at the British Embassy and found him in top form and most optimistic. My next point of call was Goering's residence. The first person I met there was Bodenschatz, who rushed up to me and expressed his delight at the course events were taking. He also told me that Goering had been delayed, but would turn up at 11 o'clock. Just before 11 Goering arrived. All ceremony had gone by the board. He dashed up to me, pressed my hand, and said excitedly: "We'll have peace. Peace has been assured." He considered that the ice had been broken by the favourable turn the negotiations had taken and that the questions to be settled with Poland were a bagatelle when weighed against the present prospects of an understanding between Germany and England.

During our conversation, Goering described how he had been summoned to Hitler immediately after Henderson's departure, how Hitler, Goering and Ribbentrop had discussed the conference with Henderson, and how satisfied all three of them were with the result. In this connection Hitler had turned to Ribbentrop and said, mockingly: "Do you still believe that Dahlerus is a British agent?" Somewhat acidly Ribbentrop replied that perhaps it was not the case. This mild indiscretion, which Goering let slip in a conversation some time later, is rather indicative of the state of affairs within the German government and proves in its trivial way that Ribbentrop was exploiting every opportunity that came his way of hindering and complicating a settlement. It was probably not a coincidence that throughout these ominous days Hitler never permitted Ribbentrop to attend our conferences and that he never gave me a chance to exchange a word with the Foreign Minister except for brief greetings when we met a couple of times in the Chancellery. During one of my meetings with Hitler, Ribbentrop suddenly entered the room, obviously with the idea of forcing Hitler to allow him to be present. But Hitler simply brushed him off with the words: "I'll let you know when I need you." Later I found further proof that Ribbentrop was my enemy from the very outset.

After my conversation with Goering I went back to the British Embassy to meet Henderson. Forbes introduced me to him, and the Ambassador received me in a friendly, though somewhat reserved, manner. Our conference, which lasted for more than an hour, began with my expressing regret that I had not had the opportunity of meeting him earlier. I assured him that it was my earnest desire to inform him, point by point, of everything I knew that could be of help or interest to him in forming his opinion of the delicate and vital questions under discussion. Henderson declared that he, personally, was of the opinion that under no circumstances could one believe a word of what Hitler said; instead we should always be prepared to find that he was playing a ruthless and treacherous part to conceal his true plans and intentions. I then asked him for his opinion of Goering and

was interested to hear that he put him in a slightly different category from Hitler, Ribbentrop and the rest of the influential members of the German government. But that did not stop him from being exceedingly sceptical regarding Goering. One must, he claimed, study carefully everything Goering did and weigh critically his every statement. To my direct question whether he believed that Goering had ever deliberately lied in discussing the important questions now at stake, Henderson's reply was as unhesitant as it was final: "Heaps of times!"

I nevertheless declared that in my opinion Goering was the only man we could count on in the present extraordinarily delicate situation, and I expressed the hope that matters would develop in such a way that he would come to have a decisive voice in the decisions to be made. It turned out that Henderson quite agreed with me. He said frankly that he had always found it easier to come to terms with Goering than any of the other German leaders.

Henderson informed me that he had an appointment with Hitler that evening to receive the German reply to the British note. Even though he had found some cause for optimism in his latest conference with the Germans, he could not conceal his profound scepticism and worry at the thought of the coming meeting. We were sitting in his study, the appointments and atmosphere of which were typically English. The only other living being present was a fat old dachshund, to whom Henderson was obviously deeply attached. When my host several times left his seat to offer me a glass of sherry, he unfailingly took a few seconds off to give his four-footed friend a little attention.

Henderson seemed to me a tired man. He looked much older than his age. Before I left him he told me he hoped we would be able to co-operate closely during the next few days, if it were found necessary. We did keep in contact with each other, and he tried to help me in every way and keep me informed of everything that he considered might prove useful.

Late in the evening of the same day—the 29th August—

I ate the first real meal I had had for several days at the Hotel Esplanade together with a few Swedish friends. At 10 o'clock, when we had just come to the fish, I was called to the telephone. Forbes was at the other end of the line. He sounded very upset and asked if he could see me immediately. A few minutes later he arrived at the hotel, and we sat down at a table in a deserted corner of the restaurant. He had not lost his usual calm poise so typical of the Scot, but nevertheless I could see how upset he was when he proceeded to tell me that Henderson had just returned from his talk with Hitler, which had turned out very badly indeed.

At first the meeting with Hitler and Ribbentrop, at which Henderson alone represented Great Britain, had been tranquil and had seemed to be full of promise. The means of effectively carrying out the points set up in Hitler's note to the British were discussed. Finally, Hitler had taken up the German reply and had read it aloud. On the whole the contents of the note confirmed Hitler's acceptance of the British views, but at the end the German government demanded that delegates from Poland should arrive in Berlin for negotiations during the course of the 30th of August. Henderson had found the formulation of this demand outrageous, since he interpreted it as an ultimatum on Germany's part, and he had expressed his opinion in no uncertain terms. Hitler had flown into a temper, and a dispute had developed between the two, which, according to Forbes, was both painful and violent.

The exact text of the part of the note that gave rise to the controversy is as follows:

> Under these circumstances the German government has therefore consented to the proposed mediation by the British government, in such a manner that a plenipotentiary delegate from Poland be sent to Berlin. It calculates that this delegate will arrive on Wednesday, 30th August, 1939.[1]

[1] *Germany's Second White Book*, No. 464. Compare reproduction, pages 87-8.

On the occasion of a later visit to Berlin I was informed by Ribbentrop's secretary, Brückelmeier, that great pains had been taken with the formation of the note, but that the real responsibility for its contents lay with Ribbentrop. Whether this treacherous paragraph had been inserted by Ribbentrop without Hitler understanding the reaction it would elicit, or

Verhältnisse in Polen nicht mehr in der Lage wäre, ohne Hinzuziehung der Sowjet-Union sich zu Garantien zu verpflichten oder an Garantien teilzunehmen.

Im Übrigen hat die Deutsche Reichsregierung bei ihren Vorschlägen nie die Absicht gehabt, lebenswichtige Interessen Polens anzugreifen oder die Existenz eines unabhängigen polnischen Staates in Frage zu stellen. Die Deutsche Reichsregierung ist unter diesen Umständen daher damit einverstanden, die vorgeschlagene Vermittlung der Königlich Britischen Regierung zur Entsendung einer mit allen Vollmachten versehenen polnischen Persönlichkeit nach Berlin anzunehmen. Sie rechnet mit dem Eintreffen dieser Persönlichkeit für Mittwoch, den 30. August 1939.

Die Reichsregierung wird die Vorschläge einer für sie akzeptablen Lösung sofort ausarbeiten und diese wenn möglich bis zur Ankunft des polnischen Unterhändlers auch der Britischen Regierung zur Verfügung stellen.

The last two pages of the German Note, with passages underlined by Goering.

whether it had been put in by order of Hitler, Brückelmeier did not know.

Meanwhile, the result of the dispute was that the conference had ended on a very discordant note. Suddenly the situation had become exceptionally precarious. Forbes considered it hopeless to continue negotiations under the circumstances, when the British must constantly be on the watch for surprises sprung by the Germans, and his optimistic mood of the past few days had given way to a conviction that the situation had grown so acute that one must be prepared for the worst. We were discussing ways and means when I was called to the telephone. This time it was Goering who wanted to speak to me. He was exceedingly upset and nervous, and requested that I come to him immediately to discuss certain matters of vital importance. Forbes agreed with me that it would be invaluable to learn what effect the conference had had on the German government, and we took leave of one another. He went off to the British Embassy and I to Goering's home in Berlin.

The minute I arrived I was taken in to Goering, who was in a very agitated condition. He had just returned from a meeting with Hitler and had brought with him a copy of the German note. He described in irate tones the meeting between Hitler and Henderson. His version corresponded exactly with

that of Forbes, although Goering naturally blamed Henderson for the scene. He sat down, grabbed a red pencil, went through the note and underlined with one or two strokes the phrases he considered of special significance, and as he read he voiced his opinion that the note was worded in a conciliatory spirit. He said that Henderson's outburst must be regarded as proof that the British did not want to reach an agreement, and expressed deep disappointment at what had happened.

I still have Goering's copy of the note, and the last two pages with the paragraph that gave rise to the controversy are reproduced on pages 87-8. Goering's pencil marks under certain words speak for themselves.

The change in the atmosphere was as sudden as it was unexpected and ominous, and I felt very much depressed. Goering was not only nervous, he was angry. In a torrent of words he poured out the views of the German government. I tore off a piece of paper from the pad on his desk and jotted down notes in an effort to make head or tail of what he was telling me. All the old resentment against England now came up to the surface, all the points of dispute were revived; England was now judged from an entirely different angle than during the past few days.

In our previous conferences we had not discussed Poland's policy in general, nor had we touched on Germany's relations with Poland. Instead our discussions had been confined to the problem of Danzig and the Corridor. Now, however, I heard what Poland really was worth. The explanation of the wording of the note, according to Goering, was that the German government was dubious as to the true intentions of the Polish government. "*Wir kennen die Polen*," Goering burst out—"we know the Poles." He then embarked on a series of attacks on Poland, the Polish policy and the Polish attitude in general.

As a nation the Poles were inferior, their behaviour to the Germans was shameless, and Germany could no longer tolerate their insolence. The Poles had long been making military preparations and had mobilised the greater part of their army. Naturally Germany had arranged precautionary

measures. A large part of the German army had marched to the Polish border. "Sixty German divisions are there waiting," Goering told me. "That corresponds to about one million men, but we all hope that nothing will happen, that military action between Poland and Germany will not become necessary. However, in view of the present exceedingly critical situation, we are compelled to insist that a settlement be reached without delay."

He went on: "The Poles are mad. Their treatment of their German minority is inexplicable and inhuman. Large-scale organised attacks happen every day. As an example I may tell you that we received a report this afternoon to the effect that a German reserve officer witnessed the shooting by Polish soldiers of five German refugees, who were trying to escape by swimming over the Warthe River. This episode has enraged Hitler. Orders have been issued to the German army to ignore provocation from the Poles, but it is unforgivable that a German officer has to see German refugees being shot down like dogs by Poles without being able to intervene. If I had been in the German officer's boots, I should have disobeyed orders and fired on the Poles to save my countrymen. The situation is untenable, and the German government cannot tolerate episodes of this kind."

At this point I interrupted and pointed out that it would be infinitely short-sighted to allow this sort of incident to make any difference when choosing between war or peace in Europe. An affair of this kind, if it really occurred, might well be the result of an undisciplined outbreak on the part of Polish officers or non-commissioned officers, and its importance should not be exaggerated. But Goering would not let me go on. He burst out: "The Poles are conducting violent anti-German propaganda in their state-controlled radio. To-day the Polish radio reported that German soldiers, who had crossed the Polish frontier as deserters, were miserably badly equipped, that their uniforms were held together with string." He ended his outburst by stating that the only reason Germany did not declare war on Poland was because the German government was animated by its desire to reach an agreement

with England. But it would be madness if England and France were able to prevent Germany from intervening in Poland if it were found necessary. He wound up with the words: "Italy will be neutral in such a conflict no matter what happens."

Goering went on to say that the chances of enforcing Germany's demands on Poland could not be better than they were just now. The pact with Russia had been ratified,[1] and German troops were standing along the Polish frontier. It was quite clear that the Poles were firmly determined to sabotage any chance of reaching an agreement. They were provoking the Germans because they knew they had an effective pact with England. He again brought up the radio reports as proof of Polish provocation, and insisted that anti-German radio propaganda had been specially broadcast that day with the approval of the Polish government, or at least without it having made any objection.

Things looked black. If Hitler was in the same state of mind as Goering, the chances of an agreement were in truth infinitesimal. However, Goering gradually calmed down, and while I was racking my brain for counter-suggestions he gave me a vital piece of information. He told me in strictest confidence that Hitler was busy working out a "*grosszügiges Angebot*" to Poland. He had begun this proposition during the day, which made the controversy between Hitler and Henderson even more regrettable. Goering expressed the hope, however, that Hitler would follow through his plan and present his offer early the next morning. Goering, of course, could not inform me of the details of this plan, but in his eagerness to convince me of the German government's desire to reach an agreement he was willing to give me an idea of its import.

(1) Germany should retain—as mentioned in my earlier discussion with Hitler—her claims on Danzig.

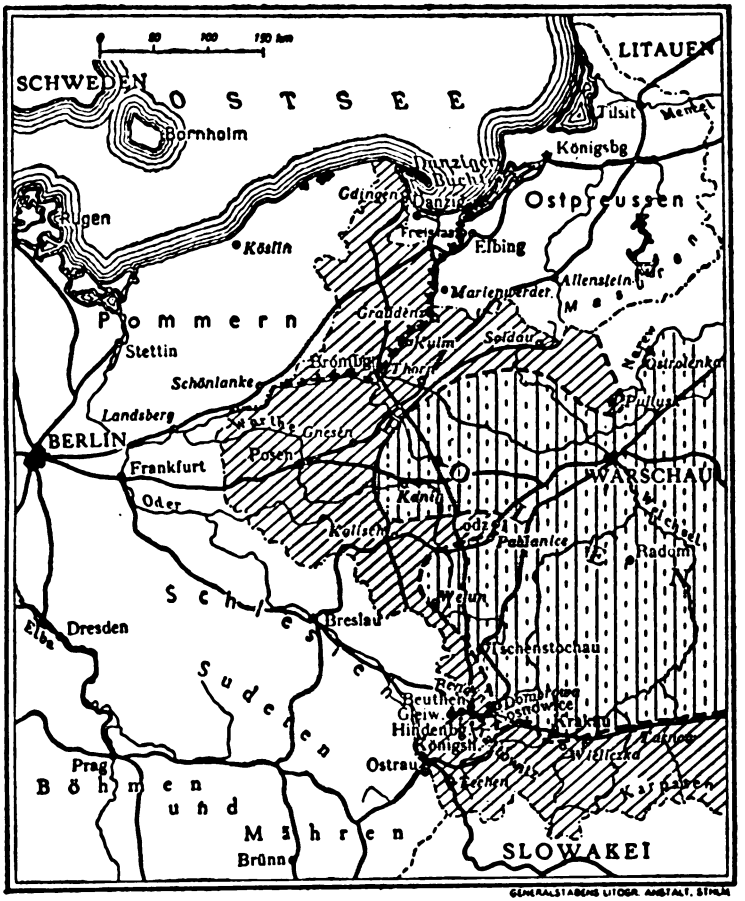
[1] Later the same night when I had returned to my hotel, Goering telephoned and confirmed this point. Ratification had been postponed until Thursday, the 31st of August for "purely formal reasons." In reality the pact was ratified on the evening of the 31st of August. (*Bolin: Det ensidiga valdet*, page 472.)

(2) In order to achieve a just and lasting solution of the problem of the Corridor, Hitler would probably suggest a plebiscite in the areas involved. This plebiscite should be conducted on approximately the same lines as that in the Saar and would affect the territories with mixed German-Polish populations. If the plebiscite should give the territory to Poland, Germany would be granted a traffic zone—a "corridor through the corridor"—with a broad highway and a four-track railway. This railway would be constructed so as not to interfere with Poland's traffic lines. If, on the other hand, the plebiscite should go in Germany's favour, Poland would be granted similar lines of communication. The agreement would be guaranteed by five great powers.

To my question as to which territory the plan referred, Goering replied that this matter was being studied, but that, on the basis of the discussions that had already taken place, he could show it me on the map. He tore a page out of an atlas and sketched in some territory with a green pencil. Then he outlined in red the area that could be regarded as pure Polish. When he had drawn in the line of demarcation and studied the whole, he changed the line to include Lodz in the plebiscite area, because, as he said, the majority of the population of Lodz were Germans.

This map, a reproduction of which is given in this book,[1] is extraordinarily interesting because it illustrates the rapidity and recklessness with which the decisions in this question were reached. I had the map with me when I left for London a few hours later. But it turned out that the boundaries drawn up on it differed very considerably from those given in Ribbentrop's proposals, now so well known, presented "at top speed" to Henderson on the night of the 30th–31st of August. According to that document, the boundary was to run from the Baltic along the line Marienwerder–Graudenz–Kulm–Bromberg to Schönlanke. I have added that line to the map to illustrate how much Hitler altered his original demand when composing his final note to Poland. What was in a

[1] *See* page 93.



Goering's suggestions for the partition of Poland. (A) First proposed frontier; (B) subsequent proposed frontier; (C) Hitler's proposal; (D) German population according to Goering; (E) Polish population according to Goering.

sense the most interesting aspect of the proposition is not revealed on the map. I am referring to the idea of a corridor through the Corridor with effective traffic routes at different levels, an idea accepted by Hitler but which numerous sensible people had undoubtedly thought of before him as the only possible way of smoothing out the differences between Germany and Poland on this excessively delicate point.

Our long conversation ended with Goering urging me to fly straight to London to report in detail to the British government on the events of the evening and to stress once more Germany's determination to reach an agreement. Furthermore, Goering was exceedingly eager that I should hint confidentially to the British government that Hitler, on the 30th, intended to present Poland with a note, the conditions of which would be so lenient that they would undoubtedly be acceptable to the Poles and to the British government. Goering offered to put a German plane at my disposal immediately if I could not get a British plane in time. He wanted me to inform him as soon as I had met the British. This I agreed to do and did.

Before we parted he went over the German point of view again, saying finally that if we never met again he would like to take the opportunity of thanking me for what I had done and for my tireless energy in the cause of peace. I was somewhat surprised by this farewell, and could not help replying that in all probability we should meet again soon. His expression changed and he said, solemnly: "Perhaps, but certain people are doing what they can to prevent you getting out of this alive." At a meeting in October of the same year, Goering had told me that Ribbentrop had tried to arrange for my plane to crash, hence his solemn expression as he said good-bye to me.

I left Goering at about 2 o'clock in the morning of Wednesday the 30th and went straight to Forbes at the British Embassy to tell him of the result of my conference. Forbes considered there was no chance of getting an English plane over in time and promised to report to London in such

a way that my arriving in a German plane would not be misunderstood. I then called up Spencer and asked him to get into contact with the British government. He agreed, although it was the middle of the night. He must have talked to Sir Kingsley Wood because within half an hour he telephoned and informed me that my arrival in London was expected and there was nothing to stop me arriving in a German plane.

CHAPTER VIII

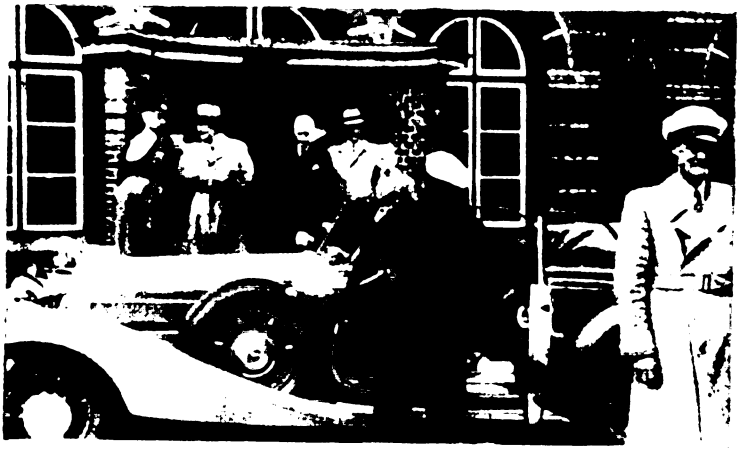
LONDON AND BERLIN
30TH—31ST AUGUST

AT 4 o'clock in the morning of Wednesday the 30th of August a car fetched me from my hotel and took me to a military airfield outside Berlin and I left by plane for London at 5 o'clock. The pilot was the same one who had flown me to Berlin. The trip was uneventful and we landed at Heston aerodrome at twenty minutes past nine. Heston is a small airfield and nobody seemed to have noticed that a German plane had landed in London again. Spencer and two other friends met me and during the trip to London we changed cars several times to avoid detection. The last time we changed Spencer and I were left alone in the car. We drove into St. James's Park and drew up at a side entrance to the Foreign Office. As we passed through Westminster, we were astounded to notice a couple of the morning papers' placards announcing in screaming headlines the news that a "mysterious plane left Berlin at 5 o'clock this morning." It was a mystery to me how the news had got out, but I had to admire the English journalists' fast work. As a further example of their keenness I may mention that three Press photographers rushed up when Spencer and I got out of the car at the Foreign Office. However, Spencer attracted their attention and asked them whom they were looking for and I was able to sneak in through the side door without being photographed.

Once in the Foreign Office I met Sir Alexander Cadogan and shortly afterwards we went over to Number 10 Downing Street for a meeting at 10.30 with Chamberlain, Halifax and

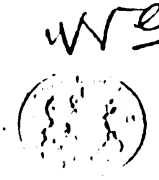
Goering in the box of honour outside Hamburg Town Hall, on Sunday, 22nd July, at the *Kraft durch Freude* Festival. On the left, Stadthalter Kauffmann; right, Dr. Ley.

Goering receiving children's homage during the procession.

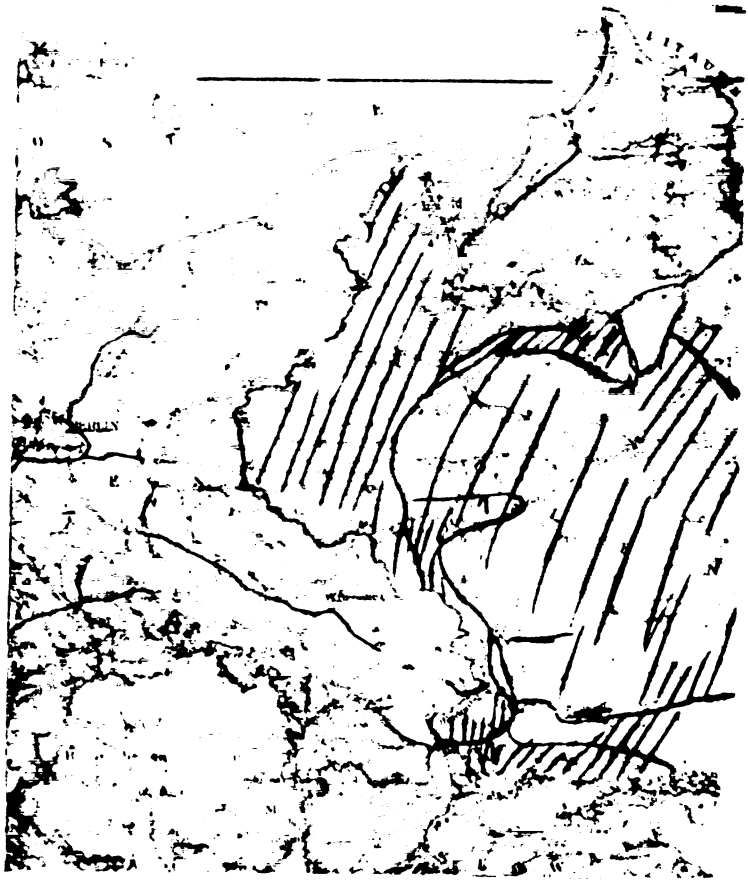


Goering's arrival at Bredstedt Station on Monday, 7th August.

Sönke Nissen Koog is a collection of seven farms, of which the one above is called Elizabeth Bay; the conference took place there on 7th August.



Sir Alexander's Notes of the names of those whom the author was to visit at the British Embassy in Berlin—his only introduction or proof of his *bona fide* on that occasion.



The map on which Goering "solved" the Polish question with a crayon on the night of 29th-30th August, 1939.

Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's right hand. The atmosphere was sombre but I could sense that the British leaders were firmly determined not on any condition to tolerate any further violence on Germany's part. Chamberlain condemned Hitler categorically. He had clearly reached the limit of his patience and had practically speaking lost all confidence in the value of continued negotiations.

I reported as briefly as I could on what had happened and gave an account of my conversations with Forbes and with Goering. I expressed the opinion that if the Germans attempted to provoke acts of violence on the part of the Poles, it was of the greatest importance that the British government take counter-measures. Goering, I told them, had made a report of the shooting of five German refugees the excuse for an enraged attack on the Poles, and I suggested that the British government made the following recommendations to the Polish government:

(1) Not to open fire on German refugees or members of the German minority party, even if the latter tried to stir up trouble, but to put them under preventive arrest instead.

(2) To refrain from violence against the German minority party and also prevent the Polish population from committing any acts of violence.

(3) To allow members of the German minority party to flee over the frontier to Germany without hindrance from the Polish military or other authorities.

(4) To prevent any aggravation of the situation by unadvised radio propaganda.

Clear evidence of the British government's determination to leave no stone unturned in their attempt to improve the situation and avert a catastrophe is given by the fact that Lord Halifax sent telegraphic instructions based on my proposals to the British Ambassador in Warsaw, Sir H. Kennard. The telegram was sent off at 5.30 that afternoon and ran as follows:

Atmosphere may be improved if strict instructions are given or confirmed by Polish government to all their military and civil authorities:

(1) *Not to fire on fugitives or members of the German minority who cause trouble but to arrest them.*

(2) *To abstain themselves from personal violence to members of the German minority and to prevent similar violence on the part of the population.*

(3) *To allow members of the German minority wishing to leave Poland to pass freely.*

(4) *To stop inflammatory propaganda.*

Please inform M. Beck, adding that I realise that Herr Hitler is using reports to justify immoderate action, but I am anxious to deprive him of this pretext. I am requesting German government to reciprocate: and warning them that Polish government can only be expected to maintain such instructions if no provocation is offered to members of the German minority.

It was quite patent that all those present were exceedingly sceptical of the possibility of bringing negotiations with the Germans to any sort of conclusion. Nevertheless, I told Chamberlain what I had heard from Goering, namely, that Hitler was working on a proposal, the "*grosszügiges Angebot,*" which was to be ready some time during the day. Both Chamberlain and Halifax said they thought this was either a trick to gain time or else Goering had been fooled or was trying to fool me. In my opinion this was such an important point that I suggested telephoning to Goering for confirmation that the note really was being prepared and for a hint as to its contents. I made the call from Cadogan's office and in his presence and got through to Goering without any trouble. He at once assured me that the note was now finished and that its terms were even more generous than he had told me during the night.

Then we all assembled in the Cabinet Room at Number 10 Downing Street. Cadogan confirmed the telephone call, I produced the map and reported in detail what Goering had told me during the conversation concerning the terms of

the note. The map was studied with deep interest and I then repeated what Goering had said over the telephone.

Next we went over my copy of the German note point by point, paying particular attention to the phrasing of the paragraph that had given rise to the controversy between Henderson and Hitler, i.e., the one in which the Germans demanded that a Polish delegate present himself in Berlin on 30th August. Chamberlain and his colleagues patently mistrusted the demand that the negotiations take place in Berlin. Their distrust arose quite naturally from the results of former negotiations conducted by the German government with the governments of other countries when their leaders had been summoned to Berchtesgaden or Berlin. Chamberlain informed me that the Cabinet would meet to discuss the situation and that Henderson would then receive fresh instructions. I, for my part, would be informed by Cadogan of the British decision on the question of negotiations between Germany and Poland. I was advised to return once more to Berlin that evening to assure the German government that the British government was extremely anxious to help towards a solution. Any decision reached by the Cabinet would be passed on to me at the British Embassy, where I was to call the minute I arrived in Berlin.

Cadogan made it quite clear to me that England would scarcely encourage the Poles to conduct negotiations in Berlin. He made the suggestion that the conferences might be held elsewhere, preferably on neutral territory. I then telephoned Goering again and transmitted the suggestion that some other place than Berlin be chosen. Goering became annoyed and replied shortly: "Nonsense, the negotiations must take place in Berlin where Hitler has his headquarters, and anyhow I can see no reason why the Poles should find it difficult to send emissaries to Berlin."

At six o'clock I began my return trip to Berlin. With his usual thoughtfulness Sir Kingsley Wood had done what he could to keep secret the presence in England of a German plane. I drove out to Fairey Aviation Limited test airfield with a few of my friends, who naturally were very eager to learn if

our common effort would lead to any result. I flew in an English plane from there to Lynch, where the German plane had been moved from Heston and at about 7 o'clock we took off for Berlin. After an uneventful flight we landed at 11 o'clock at Tempelhof where I was again met by Lieutenant-Colonel Conrad. I informed him, however, that before seeing Goering I must call at the British Embassy to learn from Forbes of the British reply. At 11.30 it still had not arrived, and I therefore knew nothing of the decision reached by the British government when I left for Goering's headquarters.

The trip took an hour and I arrived at exactly 1.30 on Thursday the 31st of August. I found Goering calm and collected and not, as I had left him scarcely twenty-four hours earlier, nervous and irritable. He asked me to tell him what had happened in London and I began my account by assuring him that I was convinced that the British government had done everything in its power to prevent incidents on the Polish–German frontier. I told him of the suggestion I made to Chamberlain with the request that it be forwarded to Warsaw. I pointed out that the British government, in its effort to pour oil on troubled waters at this exceedingly critical time, expected the German government and especially Goering, to do everything possible to prevent German provocation of Poland. I went on to say that I had told Chamberlain and Halifax of my conversation with Goering and that they had seemed somewhat reassured; their distrust of the German government and its intentions still remained however. The only thing that could change the course of events at this point would be for Germany by her behaviour to convince the British government and people of the good faith of her leaders. I spoke calmly and frankly without beating about the bush and Goering listened attentively.

Then I recapitulated England's reasons for favouring direct negotiations between Poland and Germany. When I got as far as my telephone conversation with him, Goering interrupted. He had, he said, an important message for me. In the hope of reaching an agreement with England, Hitler had prepared a note to Poland which was so conciliatory in

tone that its extraordinarily democratic, just and practicable terms would cause a sensation and be acceptable to both Poland and England. Beaming all over, Goering proceeded to read the note aloud. When he had finished he asked me what I thought. Admittedly it differed in several respects from the proposition he had outlined to me the night before, but the principles were the same. The area the plebiscite would affect was considerably smaller then the one he had drawn on the map and the conditions of the plebiscite seemed to have been designed to facilitate a solution. Goering went on to say that Ribbentrop had received Henderson on the evening of the 30th to present the note. He expressed the hope that their conference would lead to a settlement as a result of direct negotiations between Poland and Germany and also—this point was of the highest importance to Germany—to a general solution of all questions pending with England. Goering seemed quite pleased but he did not fail to stress the importance of rapid action since the armies of both countries were ready for action and border incidents would have a bad effect on the present delicate situation.

I suggested to Goering that I telephone Mr. Forbes straight away and ask him if Henderson and Ribbentrop had met, if the note had been delivered and if so, what impression it had made on Henderson. Goering was sitting in a big armchair in his private drawing-room on the train. I went over to his desk, picked up the telephone, called Forbes, informed him that I was speaking from Goering's train, and asked him what I wanted to know. To my astonishment Forbes replied in his usual cool voice that the meeting between Henderson and Ribbentrop had unfortunately been extremely unfortunate. Ribbentrop had been rude and unpleasant and from the outset had adopted a negative attitude. He had then produced a piece of paper, saying it contained a list of the terms for Poland, and quickly read it aloud. Henderson saw Forbes immediately after his return and said that he had only understood three words and that he had seen no reason to try to follow Ribbentrop's rapid and sloppy recital, since he expected that the note would be given to him afterwards for

study. But to Henderson's surprise, Ribbentrop put the note back in his pocket after reading it, and when Henderson requested to see it he replied that it was too late, since it was now past midnight, the ultimatum had expired, and the Poles had lost their chance. After a brief controversy, the two men parted in a most unfriendly spirit. Forbes concluded by expressing his disgust at the way in which Great Britain's Ambassador had been treated. It was useless to do anything further, he said, when the representatives of the German government behaved in such a fashion.

I put down the receiver, turned to Goering and said: "If Ribbentrop is going to take every chance of sabotaging attempts to reach an agreement nothing that you or I can do is going to help." I told him what had happened and added: "If you honestly want to come to terms with England and to lay the foundations for future co-operation you will have to repair Ribbentrop's blunder by informing the British Ambassador at once of the contents of the note to Poland. You yourself have stressed the fairness of the note; therefore it is only right that the British government be allowed to see it."

Goering rose and began to pace up and down the little drawing-room, his hands clasped behind him. He was nervous and also obviously surprised at the turn events had taken. I suggested that I telephone Forbes at once and tell him of the terms of the note. Goering still paced the floor, apparently wondering if he dared take the risk. Suddenly he stopped short, looked at me and said: "I'll do it, I'll take the responsibility! You can telephone him." I took Goering's copy of the note, telephoned Forbes, and read it to him. Forbes knew German but he asked me to read more slowly. However, my slow pace made Goering nervous and he urged me to hurry up. The situation was rather unpleasant. I could hardly tell Forbes why I was speaking more rapidly than he wished nor could I tell Goering why I had to go more slowly than was agreeable to him. Goering was obviously afraid Ribbentrop would find out what he had done; this, of course, was the reason why he wanted the telephone conversation

over and done with as soon as possible. When the call was finished I once again told Goering how pointless all attempts to save the peace would be if Ribbentrop by his personal ambition, his unfounded hatred of England or any other incredible and incomprehensible motive was going to spoil every chance that came up. Goering looked thoughtful for a moment but quickly changed the subject and began to question me in detail about the negotiations in London.

Time passed and not until 2.30 in the morning did I take my leave and return to Berlin. Goering invited me to stay in the train, where a sleeping compartment would be at my disposal. He told me I could not possibly work day after day, night after night without sleep. I refused his offer and pointed out that it would be exceedingly unsuitable for me to accept such an invitation from the Germans; it might lead the British to suspect me of being a German agent—just as Ribbentrop had tried to convince Hitler that I was in the pay of the British. Goering replied that it was ridiculous to suppose that a man would be suspected by one party just because he borrowed a bed for a few hours from the other one. He managed to convince me and I fell into bed and enjoyed several hours of much-needed sleep in Bodenschatz's compartment.

By 7 o'clock I was up again and out for a stroll in the coppice near the train. At 8 I saw Goering, who had obviously done a good deal of thinking about the consequences of the incident between Henderson and Ribbentrop the evening before. The minute we met he urged me to write down the main points in the note to Poland and then drive in to Henderson and make sure that Forbes had understood what I had dictated over the telephone. He went on to stress the importance of the note reaching the knowledge of the British government as quickly as possible and said he considered this essential if the crisis were not to end in disaster. I borrowed a pad from Goering and he dictated the sixteen points to me. I then jumped into a car and dashed off to the British Embassy. I arrived soon after 10 and was immediately received by Henderson. He seemed tired and depressed and regarded the

situation as hopeless. He described his meeting with Ribbentrop and said he had only understood three words when Ribbentrop rattled off the German note to Poland. We then went over my notes which corresponded well with those made by Forbes after our nocturnal conversation.[1]

Goering had not actually put it into words but I had gathered from our conversation of the previous night that he was trying to find excuses for Ribbentrop's behaviour. I told Henderson this and emphasised the need for immediate negotiations between the Polish and German governments if anything positive were ever to be accomplished. I added that I felt that Goering was doing what he could to bring the two governments together and avert a catastrophe.

As a result of our conversation Henderson decided to telephone Lipski, the Polish Ambassador, and ask him to receive me immediately. At first I refused on the ground that I had never met Lipski and that a meeting with him, therefore, could scarcely be of any use. Henderson would not hear of this but telephoned Lipski and told him that Forbes was coming over with a Swede whom he should receive without delay. He then called Forbes and informed him of his decision and at 11 o'clock we drove off to the Polish Embassy in Forbes's little open two-seater.

The gravity of the situation struck us as we crossed the threshold of the Embassy. The hall was crowded with packing cases and the staff and servants were busy preparing for departure. Lipski received us in his office which had already been cleared of most of its furnishings. Forbes introduced me to the Ambassador and we sat down round a table. Lipski was as white as a sheet and seemed excessively nervous and depressed. Forbes told him who I was and related the events of the night. He then asked me to read aloud the German note

[1] Sir Nevile Henderson's report to Halifax (*British Blue Book*, No. 92), which was received by the Foreign Office at 9.30 in the morning, reveals that he was informed of what I told Forbes before he sent off his cabled report. In *Failure of a Mission* Henderson writes that when Ribbentrop read at top speed the sixteen-point German note he did not get the gist of more than six or seven of the articles and could not guarantee that he had understood those correctly.

to Poland, which I did, but presently Lipski declared that he could not understand what it was all about. Forbes then jotted down the main points and handed his notes to the Pole, who took the paper with trembling fingers. He gazed at it for a minute and then said he was incapable of reading it. I then offered to dictate the note to his secretary. She was called in and given instructions; and I went with her into the next room where she took down my dictation directly on the typewriter. I returned with the typewritten copy and gave it to Lipski and after an exchange of civilities Forbes and I took our departure.

On the way back to the British Embassy Forbes astonished me by saying that while I was dictating to his secretary Lipski had told him that he had no interest whatsoever in notes or any other kind of the proposals from the Germans. He had a very clear understanding of the situation in Germany after his five and a half years as Polish Ambassador, was intimately acquainted with Goering and other members of the most influential circles and he was convinced that in the event of war there would immediately be uprisings in Germany and the Polish army would march in triumph to Berlin.

Things now looked very black and we were both in the depths of depression when we arrived at the British Embassy and reported to Henderson on our visit. I asked leave to telephone London at once in order to make my report verbally. Permission was granted and a few minutes later I was telling Sir Horace Wilson what had happened.

At 12.30—this was the 31st of August—I left the British Embassy and made my way to Goering's home in Berlin to find out if there remained the slightest chance of persuading the German government to draw up a sensible plan of action instead of continuing on its present course with constant surprises in the form of threats, outbursts of rage and tactless behaviour. Goering's Berlin home was the former residence of the President of the Prussian Diet; it was situated in a park behind the Diet house at 2 *Leipzigerstrasse*. It was a large building and resembled Karinhall in its magnificent appointments. When I arrived Goering was going round the house

giving instructions to Fräulein Grundtmann, his private secretary, regarding the *objets d'art* which were to be removed to safety in the event of air raids. He broke off his tour and we settled down in his study which was gigantic, like those of all the German leaders. I told Goering, as definite proof of the energy the British were expending in their effort to bring about negotiations, that Henderson had asked me to visit Lipski. I took great care, however, not to go into any details regarding the visit itself.

At a few minutes past one an adjutant appeared and delivered an envelope from the Foreign Office, which had just arrived by messenger. It was a red envelope of the kind reserved for especially urgent affairs of state. Goering ripped it open and when he had read the contents he shot out of his chair like a cannon ball and began to walk up and down in a state of great agitation. In furious accents he told me that he now had the final proof in his hands, the proof that the Poles were sabotaging every chance of bringing about negotiations. At least five minutes passed before he was calm enough to inform me of the contents of the message. The Germans, Goering said, had got hold of a code telegram from the Polish government in Warsaw to Lipski, which had reached Berlin at 12.45. It was a copy of a German translation of this telegram that he had in his hands and he was now able to assure me that it was the Poles' fault and not Ribbentrop's that no negotiations could ever take place. Goering considered that the telegram proved this so conclusively that he himself made a copy, gave it to me and asked me to pass it on to Henderson. At the same time he pointed out expressly that he was taking a great risk but did so willingly since he felt that Henderson ought to be made aware of how the Poles had behaved. The document is reproduced in this book (pages 109-11), and also appears in the Polish White Book, No. 110, and in the British Blue Book, No. 102, in the form of a message from Henderson to Halifax. The English translations of the two versions, the one Goering gave me and the one printed in the Polish White Book, read as follows:

Goering's version.

"Request a meeting and state as follows:

Last night the Polish government received from the British government a report of an exchange of views between the German and British governments regarding the possibility of an agreement being reached directly between the German and Polish governments.

The Polish government will consider the British government's proposal and will make a formal reply to the British government within a few hours (*not to the German government*).

The following special and secret message is addressed to the Ambassador:

Do not under any circumstances enter into any factual discussions; if the German government makes any verbal or written proposals, you are to reply that you have no authority whatever to receive or discuss such proposals and that you are only in a position to deliver the above message from your government and that you must await further instructions."

Telegram in Poland's White Book.

"I am in receipt of your report and beg you, M. l'Ambassadeur, to request an audience with the Foreign Minister of the Reich or the Secretary of State, and inform them as follows:

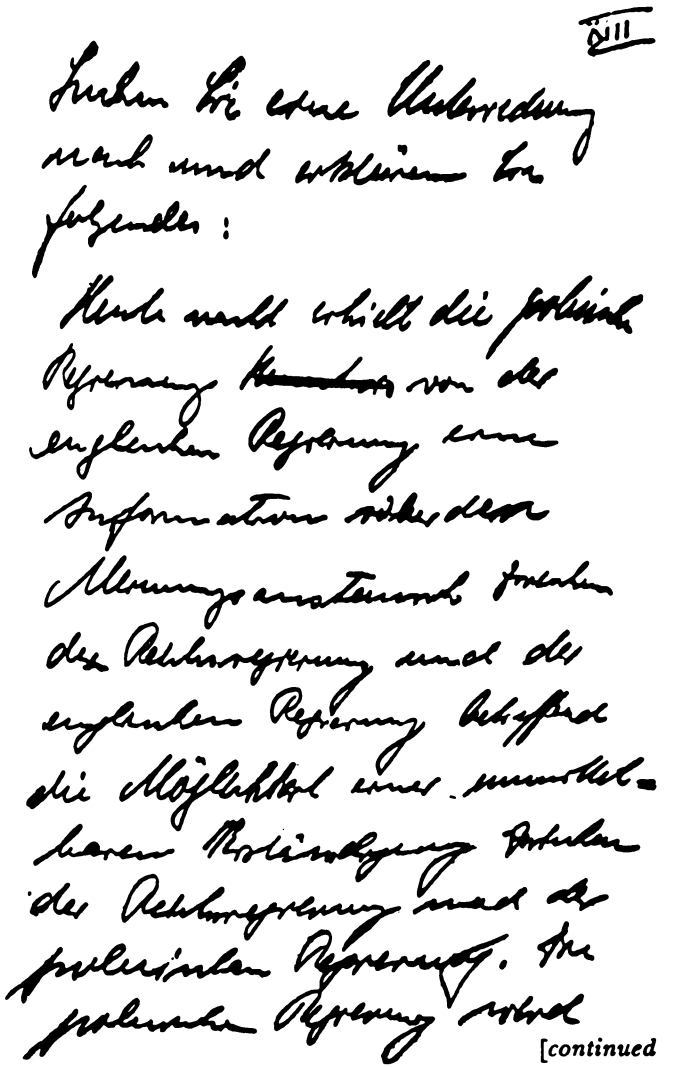
To-night the British government informed the Polish government about its discussion with the German government regarding the possibility of direct negotiations between the German and Polish governments.

The Polish government considers the British government's proposal in a favourable spirit and a formal reply will be given to this government within a few hours at latest."

As is seen, the two versions differ very considerably. In the first place, according to the Polish version, the Polish government intended to "consider" the British government's proposal in a "favourable spirit." These words do not appear in Goering's version. In the second place, and this is of far greater significance, the Polish White Book version contains no mention of the second section, which Goering claimed was included in the telegram. The explanation must be the following: either the Polish Foreign Office eliminated this section in editing its White Book or else the Germans simply took it upon themselves to insert it. In the latter case the copy Goering gave me was a deliberate falsification of the telegram. Certain statements in the Blue Book (cf. documents No. 96, Point 3, and No. 100, Point 3) appear to support the first alternative. I personally had no chance of verifying the authenticity of the document at the time Goering gave me his copy.

Anyhow I considered it hopeless to try to reach any result with Goering in his present mood. So I just let him rave on about Lipski and the Poles, whose behaviour from the very outset he violently condemned, while in the same breath he painted a glowing picture of Germany's intentions and actions. Finally, just before half-past one he suggested that we lunch together. We could not eat in his home because his household had been disbanded so he suggested that we should go either to *Haus der Flieger* or to Kaiserhof Hotel. However, when we got into the car he changed his mind and suggested that we lunch at the Esplanade, which meant that I would be host. Our only companion was Lieutenant-Colonel Conrad, Goering's adjutant.

Our arrival at the Esplanade a few minutes later naturally caused a tremendous sensation. The tension in Berlin was almost unbearable on Thursday the 31st, and Goering's arrival at the Esplanade for lunch and with a foreigner into the bargain set tongues wagging. We were given a table in a far corner. I usually sat there because it was so secluded that one could carry on a conversation with no fear of being overheard. I hoped that if Goering—whose weakness for good food



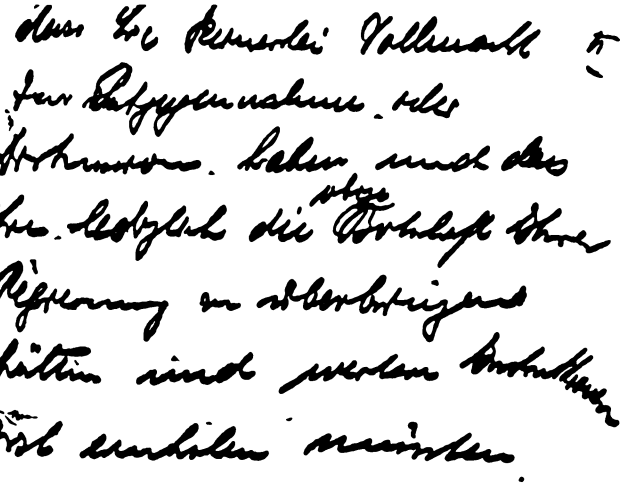
Copy of Polish telegram in Goering's handwriting.

die Vorschläge der englischen
Regierung bilden und in
einigen Stunden der
englischen (statt der deutschen)
Regierung eine formelle
Antwort erteilen.

Als besondere Geheimnachricht
für den Botschafter wird dann
anschließend mitgeteilt:

Bitte unter keinen
Umständen endgültige Entschlüsse
zu fassen; im Falle der
Ablehnung mündliches oder
schriftliches Vorschlage durch die
Reichsregierung zu erbitten.

[*continued*



was a byword—were given some really first-rate dishes he would calm down enough for us to have a serious talk. I got hold of Herr Voss, the chef, and told him to do his best so as to put Goering in a good mood. The meal began with lobster, one of Goering's favourite dishes, and continued with a number of other delicacies and by the time coffee was served with some excellent old brandy the atmosphere had brightened considerably. As an example of Goering's unabashed attitude toward other people's property, I was amused to note that after a few sips of brandy he instructed his adjutant to order two bottles of the same to be sent out to his car. Even on such a critical day as the 31st of August, 1939, Goering was able to show a lively interest in his own well-being. The only thing which did not satisfy him was the cigars so he chose to smoke his own long Austrian ones.

As we ate I collected my thoughts and pondered on the situation. I came to the conclusion that further discussions with Hitler would be fruitless. For one thing I could not believe that he was normal and for another it was quite patent that powerful influences were working on him to promote dissension rather than conciliation. Continued negotiations

between him and Henderson could scarcely lead to any solution and the chances of Ribbentrop and Henderson getting anywhere seemed even more remote. At what seemed a suitable moment I told Goering my conclusions. There was no point, I said, in continued discussion in the present critical situation with people who could not keep their tempers and who allowed personal interests to influence them in such momentous questions. However, I went on, Goering had always insisted that he had a high opinion of Henderson, that he was a friend of his and that they had often been out shooting together. "*Herr Generalfeldmarschall*," I said, "I personally am convinced that you sincerely desire to prevent complications and to reach a positive result. And since, in addition, you are able to conduct discussions without quarrelling with your opponents, in spite of their delicate subject matter, I suggest that the last chance is for you to ask Henderson to come to see you and to do what you can together to find a solution. Direct negotiations between Poland and Germany appear to be out of the question just now, therefore our only hope is to attempt to bring about a discussion directly between England on the one hand and Germany on the other, with England representing both her own and Poland's interests, and to try to reach a just and reasonable solution."

"Yes, but I can scarcely invite Henderson to such a conference without Hitler's permission," Goering said. In that case, I said, Goering should go straight to the Chancellery and obtain Hitler's approval of the suggestion. He agreed and went off to ask Hitler for permission to confer with Henderson; I drove to the British Embassy to inform Henderson of what had happened. Henderson was agreeable to my suggestion but at the same time expressed his suspicion that the Germans only wanted to make trouble between Great Britain and Poland. While we were sitting discussing the matter in Henderson's office, Goering telephoned and asked to speak to me. He informed me that Hitler had approved of the suggestion and asked me to extend an invitation to Henderson to come to tea with him at 4 o'clock for

the purpose of discussing the situation at their leisure. At first Henderson refused categorically, but he changed his mind and replied that although he could not come at 4 o'clock he would be able to make it at 4.50. I passed this on to Goering, who added that his invitation included Forbes. I do not think that Henderson particularly liked this and he hesitated somewhat before consenting. I informed Goering that Forbes would also be coming and to my surprise he replied that Hitler had stipulated that some neutral person must also attend the meeting and requested that I be that person. I refused point-blank and said I considered it would be most improper to have an outsider, particularly a private citizen of a neutral country, present at a meeting of this kind. Goering replied in a brusque tone that in view of Hitler's orders he must therefore withdraw the invitation. To this I could only respond by accepting.

I showed Henderson Goering's copy of the intercepted code telegram and told him that I was responsible for Goering's invitation to tea. I explained my taking the initiative in this matter by telling him that I was convinced that at this time the only hope of a peaceful solution was to have Goering and Henderson agree to a programme of negotiations between Germany and Great Britain. I am certain that although Henderson listened attentively to what I had to say he was nevertheless convinced that the whole plan was only a trick to try to cause dissension between Poland and Great Britain in order to give Germany an opportunity to attack Poland undisturbed.

The British Embassy in Wilhelmstrasse was not far from Goering's residence. I arrived at the meeting at 4.50, a minute or so before Henderson and Forbes. The conference took place in one of the big drawing-rooms, where tea, cigars and cigarettes were waiting on a low round table, around which four armchairs were grouped. Goering gave Henderson a hearty welcome and the two men obviously made every effort to create a favourable atmosphere for the coming discussion. Henderson assured Goering of his esteem and spoke of his respect and admiration for the German people, adding

that he was exceedingly anxious that his mission as Ambassador in Berlin would be crowned with success. As long as we were drinking our tea Goering and Henderson conversed in a friendly fashion but kept to generalities, obviously with the object of preparing the ground for the discussion that would follow. Forbes only joined in the conversation when it was a question of emphasising the value of agreement between Germany and Great Britain, and I kept silent the whole time. Goering had obviously made up his mind to exploit all the charm which he undoubtedly possessed and winningly and convincingly he stressed the importance of an understanding between Germany and England. About half an hour passed before the real discussion began. Goering suggested that negotiations be arranged between Germany and Great Britain, with the latter representing Poland also. Henderson was clearly on his guard and his distrust undoubtedly explained his slightly reserved manner. Goering produced the intercepted code telegram from the Polish government to Lipski and presented it as proof that the Poles were sabotaging every chance of reaching an agreement and that under the circumstances Germany could scarcely come to terms with Poland.

It struck me that Henderson, although he had never said anything of the kind to me, suspected that the telegram was a forgery. However, Goering assured us that we would soon be given proof of the authenticity of the telegram: Lipski was to meet Ribbentrop at 6.30 and there was very little doubt that the meeting between the two would take place in exact accordance with the instructions Lipski had received.

Henderson declared himself willing to inform his government of Goering's proposal, i.e., that direct negotiations between Germany and Great Britain and with Great Britain representing Poland, be instituted immediately. He would not, however, express any opinion as to the practicability of the project. Goering made much of the horrors of a war between England and Germany. For instance, he would be compelled to have England bombed. Henderson replied that in that case he would probably die by Goering's hand. If that were

to happen, Goering said, he would fly over to England in person and drop a wreath on Henderson's grave.

The conference came to an end a few minutes before 7 o'clock without anything positive having been achieved and without either party undertaking to engage themselves in any way. We all felt strongly that this was the last minute of the eleventh hour. The outlook seemed hopeless.

Later in the evening I was informed by both Goering and Forbes that the meeting between Lipski and Ribbentrop had been fruitless. I had decided earlier to dine at the Esplanade with Wettermark and two German acquaintances, Mr. Philippi, a banker, and Dr. Siemers from Hamburg, but I was far too depressed. I sat with them for a few minutes and then went off to see Forbes and find out his opinion of the situation. It was clear that the meeting between Lipski and Ribbentrop had been a complete failure and that now there was no hope of negotiation between Poland and Germany. When Goering told me the same thing over the telephone he emphasised that with two armies one million strong standing facing each other, the tension was now nearly unbearable. He asked me to visit him in his special train the next morning at 8 o'clock.

I shall never forget how Forbes and I felt as we sat in his small office in the Embassy; both of us were sure that there was no more chance of saving the situation and that war would soon be upon us. Forbes told me that the Embassy staff had burnt most of the documents and he therefore wanted to make notes of the dates of our meetings of the past few days. This took us about an hour. I realised that nothing more could be done.

Later in the evening I met Richert at the Swedish Legation. We had a long talk about the events of the past twenty-four hours and it was late before I got back to my hotel. After a few hours of sleep I got up and wandered around my room uneasily awaiting the news that I was to hear at my meeting with Goering.

CHAPTER IX

THE 1ST OF SEPTEMBER

I LEFT the hotel at 7 o'clock and as the clock struck 8 on the morning of Friday the 1st of September I met Goering in his private railway car. He seemed in low spirits and began by discussing various irrelevant matters. It was quite obvious that something was on his mind which he did not much want to talk about. Finally, however, he told me that Polish guerilla troops had occupied the Gleiwitz radio station during the night and broadcast a report that the Polish army had crossed the German border and that several skirmishes had occurred between German and Polish detachments. He also said that early in the morning the Poles had blown up the bridge at Dirschau near Danzig, killing a number of Germans. These incidents were bad enough, but they hardly seemed an adequate explanation of Goering's attitude. Finally it came out: Hitler had given orders in the night that the German army was to cross into Poland and drive the Poles back from the boundary. At the same time the German air force had been instructed to try to destroy the Polish air force. Goering emphasised that he had given instructions that the Germans were to avoid air raids on civilian towns and that only military targets were to be attacked. When he had once got this off his chest and informed me in this extraordinary fashion that Germany had broken the peace and attacked Poland, he became somewhat more communicative. He told me that preliminary reports had already been received of successful air raids in which a large number of Polish planes had been destroyed on the ground.

So despite everything Hitler had decided to carry out his policy of violence and use force to bring Poland to her knees.

Goering did not really get into his stride until he began on the Polish government, the Polish people, and then the British, their responsibility and their guilt. I scarcely listened to him. I was disgusted and bitterly disappointed as I sat in his drawing-room car trying desperately to understand what had really happened, while Goering in a torrent of words attempted to convince me of the righteousness of the German action and the innocence of the German people. They had not wanted to break the peace, they had been forced into war with Poland!

By nine o'clock Goering was on his way to Berlin to attend a meeting of the *Reichstag* at the Kroll Opera House at which Hitler was going to report on what had happened and have his actions approved by the collection of subservient puppets who went under the name of Members of Parliament. Before I set out for the British Embassy Goering and I had gone on discussing the hope of a peaceful solution, which by this time meant the hope of limiting the war and preventing a world-wide conflagration. We came to the conclusion that our only chance was to persuade Hitler to allow Goering to meet the British delegates. I arrived at the Embassy just before 10 and was taken straight in to Henderson. While we were sitting in his study we saw Hitler pass by with a procession of motor cars on his way to the Kroll Opera House. I had not been able to detect any signs of enthusiasm for the war either on my drive through the suburbs or in the centre of the town. The streets seemed rather deserted and as far as we could see from the windows of the Embassy the people in the streets with few exceptions stared in silence as Hitler passed on his way to the *Reichstag*. It was a beautiful autumn day, the window in Henderson's room was wide open and we could hear scraps of Hitler's speech through the loudspeakers set up in the streets.

Henderson regarded the situation as hopeless and when I suggested the possibility of negotiations between the German and British governments, in Holland for instance, to prevent a continuation of this insane undertaking, his only reply was that he certainly did not contemplate paying Hitler a visit.

Bitterly and violently, he lashed out at the *Reichskanzler* and his colleagues who were responsible for what had happened and what now threatened to cast the whole of Europe into a devastating war.

Shortly before 11 o'clock Hitler's cortège returned from the Kroll Opera House on the way back to the Chancellery. A few minutes later Goering telephoned from the Chancellery and asked me to come over at once because Hitler wished to speak to me. *Wilhelmstrasse* was packed with people and the area round the Chancellery blocked off from the public with strong cordons of police. Goering sent two officers to the Embassy to fetch me and they conducted me through the barrier. Most of the members of the Cabinet and a number of high-ranking officers were assembled in the building. On our way to one of the great reception rooms inside the building I saw Hess, Frick and Himmler. Goering appeared a few minutes later and gave me a summary of Hitler's speech. He proudly told me that Hitler had appointed him his second in command and that this would give him greater power to work for a peaceful solution. He said that of course it was a great responsibility to be Hitler's closest associate and that he would naturally adhere loyally to the policy established by the *Führer*, but that this ought not to interfere with his aims. He asked me time and again if I really believed that England desired to reach a reasonable and peaceful agreement with Germany and he wondered if I believed that a settlement would be possible under the present circumstances.

It was quite clear to me, however, that if the outlook had been poor before it was certainly no better now. Germany's decision to confuse right with might and attempt to make Poland come to terms by armed force was hardly the basis upon which to build a happy solution. I was excessively disappointed at the turn events had taken and told him in the strongest possible terms that there was now only a faint chance of averting a world war. We must bring about a meeting between a representative of the German government, Goering himself and a few representatives of the British government.

Goering left the room to consult with Hitler. He returned a few minutes later and asked me to go with him into a smaller reception room. Here we found Hitler, alone. His calm was skin-deep, but I could see that he was nervous and upset inside. He received me graciously enough but from the very beginning his bearing struck me as abnormal. He came close up to me and with fixed, staring gaze began to speak. His breath was so foul that it was all I could do not to step back. He was obviously determined to snatch at every argument, however far-fetched, that would serve to absolve him personally for the decisions he had made.

He began by explaining that he had always been quite aware of the fact that England did not want peace, that her every move was inspired by her own selfish interests. He thanked me for all my efforts to promote understanding between the two nations and said that it was undoubtedly England's fault that they had been in vain. There was no longer, he said, any hope of coming to an agreement. Goering, who so far had not entered into the conversation, chimed in at this point to say that it was essential that the German army advance to certain specific points but he in turn was interrupted by Hitler who declared that he was now determined to crush the Polish resistance and annihilate the Polish nation. If England desired further discussions he would be willing to meet her half-way. "But," he said, "if the British don't understand that it is in their own interests to keep out of a fight with me, they will live to repent their folly." He grew more and more excited and began to wave his arms as he shouted in my face, "If England wants to fight for a year, I shall fight for a year, if England wants to fight two years, I shall fight two years. . . ." He paused and then yelled, his voice rising to a shrill scream and his arms milling wildly: "If England wants to fight for three years, I shall fight for three years. . . ." The movements of his body now began to follow those of his arms and when he finally bellowed, "*Und wenn es erforderlich ist, will ich zehn Jahre kämpfen,*" he brandished his fist and bent down so that it nearly touched the floor. The situation was highly embarrassing, so embarrassing in

fact that Goering reacted perceptibly to the spectacle Hitler was making of himself by turning on his heel so that he had his back to both of us.

I realised that there was nothing I could do or say in face of Hitler's arguments and of his extraordinary behaviour; and I understood again that there was not much hope if Germany's fate lay in the hands of this fiend. The only chance of putting matters right was if Hitler in some way could be pushed into the background and replaced by someone who at least was in full possession of his faculties. Was Goering strong enough to do anything like this and were his real motives as pure as he invariably made them out to be? Was he really capable of carrying through an undertaking of this kind? Of one thing I was positive when I left Hitler and that was that there were no bounds to the callous unscrupulousness of the man. The horrible meeting fortunately came to an end fairly soon and Goering and I drove to his house, where the staff was busy packing his art treasures. Everything combined to give the impression that preparations were being made for a world war with hitherto undreamed-of consequences to Europe.

I was very anxious to learn whether Goering's contribution to the conversation with Hitler was meant seriously and if he really was prepared to take effective steps to stop the war against Poland and enter into negotiations. Goering himself was nervous and distraught and avoided giving me a definite answer. Our discussion ended with our driving to the Esplanade again for lunch. We were interrupted several times during the meal, once by General Milch and his chief of staff, General Jeschonnek, who wished to be given directives. Nor did our conversation lead to any result. As we were saying good-bye to each other, I tried once more to convince Goering that if the attack on Poland were not stopped the inevitable result would be a world conflagration.

However, in the face of the frightful catastrophe that now threatened Europe, I still refused to give up hope. After lunch I went to the British Embassy and telephoned Cadogan to find out if he considered there was any chance of accom-

plishing anything by direct negotiations between Germany and England. Cadogan's reply was as straightforward and concise as usual and he informed me briefly and to the point of the British conditions: (1) Germany must put an end to hostilities; (2) the German troops must withdraw to the German-Polish boundary.

Later in the afternoon I went out to Goering's headquarters and had a long talk with him concerning the possibilities of finding a basis for discussions between England and Germany. But again we reached no result. Without mentioning my conversation with Cadogan I pointed out that an absolute condition for negotiations would be the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of the troops to their point of departure.

We had a strange and disagreeable conversation. The events of the day had had a noticeable effect on Goering. He had been appointed Hitler's successor; he was being given a chance to show what the Air Force could do, the Air Force whose leader and creator he was. He seemed to have completely lost the power of surveying the consequences of a war. More than once he assured me that no matter how it turned out, it would be limited to a conflict between Germany and Poland, although Russia would, of course, extort her pound of flesh in return for the pact with Germany. To him everything was lined up according to a plan which nothing could upset. Finally he called in Körner, and Gritzbach, the Secretary of State, gave them a long harangue and presented each of them with a sword of honour which he hoped they would carry gloriously through the war. It was as if all these people were in some crazy state of intoxication.

Before we parted, Goering assured me that he would nevertheless do everything in his power to stop the war from spreading and that he was still willing to help prevent its continuance, but after my experiences of the past few days, his protestations struck me as somewhat hollow. I hoped, however, that he would grasp the significance of the unwavering stand taken by Britain.

After I left Goering I went back to the British Embassy

but they had no news for me. At 8 o'clock, when I went out into the street, I had my first experience of the Berlin black-out. I went to the Swedish Legation to confer with Richert. When I at last returned to my hotel I was met by most of the staff, which with few exceptions was made up of faithful old servants whose faces I had been accustomed to recognise on my visits to the Esplanade during the past twenty years. Obviously they all had an inkling of what I was up to and it was quite natural for them now to ask me, shyly and anxiously, if I did not think that war might be avoided. One of them, a skinny little head waiter from Thueringen, produced his army papers and told me that he had fought in the last war, that he had a wife and child to support and couldn't I do something to have him exempted this time. My heart ached for him: he was such a pathetic sight as he stood there nervously explaining his position. It was extraordinary to note that not one of all these people—some of them visited me in my room long after I had gone to bed—showed hatred of Poland. All of them behaved like timid animals before an approaching danger.

CHAPTER X

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

THE next morning, Saturday, 2nd September, at 8 a.m., I visited Goering in his special train with a faint hope that I might find him more inclined to listen to the views I maintained. To my surprise he was, for as soon as we had sat down in his private drawing-room car he told me that there was talk of a mediation, sponsored by Mussolini. Mussolini was said to be fervently trying to stop the war, and especially to prevent it from spreading: Goering said that he wanted to inaugurate a new Munich. According to Goering's information France had shown herself reasonable and had declared her willingness to reach an understanding. Goering went on to say that the note which the British had sent to the Germans on Friday afternoon would not be answered until they knew whether it was possible to arrange an armistice.

At 10 o'clock I went back to Berlin and told Forbes what I had heard. He said he had not yet heard anything about any action on Mussolini's side, and was waiting to see what would happen. It was fairly clear that Forbes was sceptical over the prospects of mediation, for the British Embassy knew for certain that the British government would under no circumstances consent to negotiate unless the order was given to cease fire and the Germans withdrew their troops to their original positions. I understood from Forbes that nothing had come from London to indicate that Mussolini had made any proposals there. On the other hand I had no reason to investigate this as it was my confirmed opinion that now it was up to the Germans to do something. If they really meant

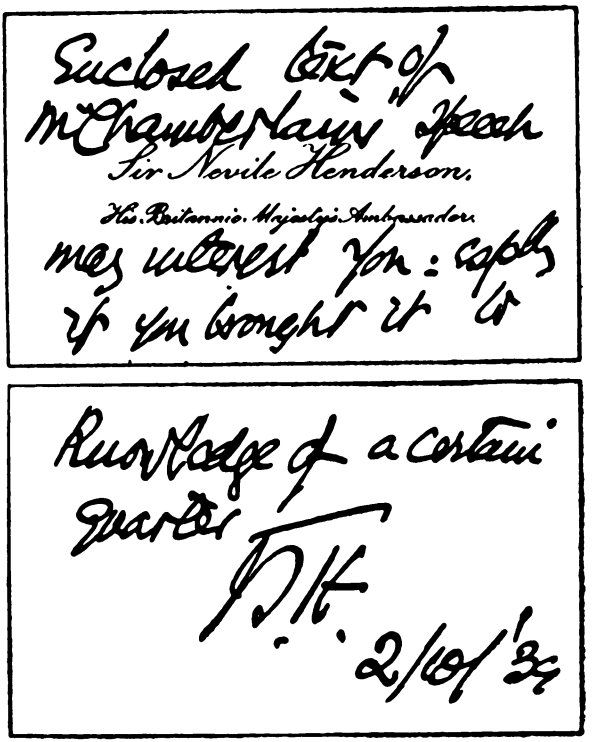
business during the past weeks with all their talk about the desirability of coming to an understanding with England, now was their chance to prove it by deeds.

At 11.30 I met Goering again in his house in Berlin. He told me that Mussolini had been in touch with the British and French governments and had also informed Hitler of his wish to mediate in the critical situation. I found this definite statement of such interest that I returned to the British Embassy and told Forbes that Goering had categorically informed me that Mussolini had started his arbitration. Forbes said he had heard nothing of this and expressed his uneasiness that though it was now one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, there was still no answer to the British note which had been delivered in the afternoon of the previous day.

I left the British Embassy and went to the Adlon where I lunched with Wettermark, but we had barely sat down when a message came from Goering, saying that he wished to speak to me at once. Immediately afterwards another messenger came and asked me to go at once to the Esplanade where Goering was awaiting me in the summer restaurant. I drove there and we lunched from 2.30 until 4. Goering was convinced that Mussolini would succeed in his mediation, but at the same time he stressed that the German government was prepared, if necessary, to continue the war with Poland, and if the Western Powers supported Poland, to engage them also.

I had invited Richert and Wettermark to dinner that night at 8, at the Esplanade. The atmosphere was depressed. At 9 a messenger came from Henderson with a copy of Chamberlain's speech to the House of Commons of that day. The enclosed visiting card is reproduced here.[1] The speech emphasised what Cadogan had said the day before, that the British government was not willing to negotiate unless hostilities ceased and Germany withdrew her troops. But at the same time the tone of Chamberlain's speech was permeated with the desire to try to prevent a catastrophe.

See page 125.



Note from Henderson on the evening of 2nd September, when sending the author a copy of Chamberlain's speech. It shows that up to the end Henderson was seeking for a chance of convincing "a certain quarter."

We came to the conclusion that it might still be possible to avoid a world war.

During the dinner Goering rang up and asked me to come to his headquarters the following morning at 9. At about 11 that evening I returned to the British Embassy to talk to Forbes. We wondered if there was any chance of being able to enforce the rightful demands of the British

government and what steps could be taken to persuade the Germans to accept them. During that evening Forbes was as calm and clearsighted as he had always been during the fateful days when it had been my lot to work with him. He declared in his candid and tactful way that he was convinced that the British government's policy was directed against the Hitlerian system, and that the topical Danzig and Corridor questions were of minor importance. The British government was obliged once for all to show the persons who ruled Germany that they must make a radical change in their methods. The events of the past years were still a recent memory and the present ones were patently an example of Hitler's delusion that he could continue with his unscrupulous policy precisely as far as it suited his book.

It was late when we parted. Forbes promised me that if anything important should happen he would at once ring me up.

He did so on Sunday, 3rd September at 7.30 a.m., and said that something important was in the wind as the entire staff had been ordered to meet at the Embassy at 8 o'clock. He promised that as soon as he had got there and found out what it was he would share his knowledge with me. Shortly before 8 he rang again and said that Henderson was going to hand Ribbentrop an ultimatum at 9 and request an answer before 11. This ultimatum required a statement touching the points of which Cadogan had told me two days earlier and which had been the subject of a note to the German government on 1st September: (1) that Germany should cease hostilities; (2) that the German troops should withdraw behind the German frontier.

We had previously arranged that a car from Stabsamt should be at my disposition at 8 o'clock to take me to Goering's headquarters, so I rushed down to the hall, got hold of the car and asked the chauffeur to drive me there as fast as possible. The non-commissioned officer at the wheel set off at tremendous speed regardless of danger and we arrived at our destination at 8.40. I was immediately received by Goering, and told him about Chamberlain's speech of the previous

evening and ended up by repeating to him exactly what Forbes had said.

It seemed as though Goering was somewhat at sea as far as the events of the last twenty-four hours were concerned, in any case the presentation in the form of an ultimatum of the British conditions, which I had previously sketched out for him, took him by surprise. He became garrulous and declared that the demand to withdraw the troops was proof that Britain did not really want a settlement. He maintained that never in the history of the world had a victorious army been compelled to withdraw before negotiations had started. Among other things he alluded to the Versailles treaty and the armistice which preceded it: first the Germans had been made to lay down their arms, after which any conditions could be forced upon them. That was a lesson which they had not forgotten. He became heated in his effort to lay all the blame on England, but broke off the conversation at about 9.15 in order to ring up Ribbentrop and hear the exact contents of the British note. He had asked me to leave him alone during this conversation, so I do not know what was said, but when after six or eight minutes he asked me to come back, he gave it as his opinion that the situation was to all intents and purposes catastrophic. He seemed very perturbed and presently decided to ring up Hitler and hear what he thought of the situation.

It seemed as though all further attempts would be meaningless, but nevertheless before he rang up Hitler I pointed out to Goering how important it was that the note which was to be sent as answer to the British ultimatum should be courteous and obliging, and that it should give clear expression to the points which Goering solemnly vowed were the cornerstone of German policy, namely, the desire to come to an understanding.

As I saw it then, Ribbentrop, with his hatred of England and everything English, had won in the tug of war for Hitler. He had succeeded in convincing the latter that an attack on Poland would not involve war with France and Britain. If Ribbentrop together with Hitler got the chance of formu-

lating the answer to the English note the result could only be an immediate declaration of war on the part of Great Britain. It was now about 9.30 a.m. The answer was to be given at 11, and Goering was at least 40 minutes distance from Berlin. Was there any possibility that he would be willing to stake everything on a determined move to prevent a world catastrophe? On the other hand, was there any chance at all that anyone in England would believe any German proposal, whatever its nature? I felt very doubtful of this and longed for some moral support before making a final decision. So I rang up the Foreign Office. I did not want to speak from Goering's drawing-room car nor from the compartment which was equipped with telephone, wireless telephone, telegraph and wireless telegraph, but used instead an instrument which was placed between the dining-car and the kitchen where I could talk more or less undisturbed. The Berlin exchange informed me that telephonic communication with London was suspended. I pleaded with the telephonist to help me, saying that it would be the best action of her life if she let me through, and I actually got through to London. The same thing happened there and I was not allowed to contact the Foreign Office, but eventually I managed to have my own will and finally, at 10 o'clock, spoke to one of its officials, I seem to remember it was Mr. Roberts. I implored him to tell the Prime Minister from me that with my knowledge of the actual situation of Germany I firmly believed that there was no chance of persuading the Germans to agree to more than a "standstill," i.e., an immediate cessation of hostilities. I was in an extremely painful position for I had to take for granted that every word I said was carefully recorded by Himmler's organisation and subsequently reported to Hitler and Ribbentrop, but I emphasised as best I could how important it was that genuine negotiations should take place, for an exchange of notes could not yield any result in such a critical situation. Roberts promised briefly to forward my message to Chamberlain. Throughout the conversation I had received no directive or encouragement, but at least I had stressed the gravity of the situation.

It was characteristic of the German power system and Hitler's governing methods that now, after receiving the British ultimatum, he did not send for Goering who had been proclaimed his second in command only two days before. Instead, apparently without conferring with Goering or any other member of the government, he proceeded to formulate his answer with the assistance of Ribbentrop only.

I pondered for a few minutes and then went back to Goering and suggested that he offer to fly to London, as representative of the German government, possibly with some other delegates, and there negotiate with the British government and try to come to some agreement. In order to make such a proposition acceptable to the British he would have to suggest leaving German soil before 11 o'clock, in order to reach London as soon as possible. Goering immediately gave some instructions to General Bodenschatz and then rang up Hitler, speaking to him for about ten minutes. As soon as he had done so he asked me to come back to his drawing-room car and then told me that Hitler had agreed to the suggestion, if it were possible to carry it out. Hitler wished to reserve his final decision about Goering's expedition until he learnt whether Great Britain was agreeable to the suggestion, as presented by me. If this was the case Goering pledged himself to leave German soil before 11 o'clock and fly direct to London.

I rang up Forbes at once and made the suggestion, but he considered that Great Britain could not approach the question of the desirability of a visit from Goering before the note was answered. His summing up of the position was that Britain required complete "assurance of sincerity." At 10.20 I rang up the Foreign Office again and had nearly as much trouble as before till I got through at 10.30 and made my proposal to Roberts. I do not know whether he had talked to Halifax only or also to the Premier, but after about five minutes he announced that the British government could not consider such a proposal until it had received an answer to the note; this answer must decide whether or not Goering's visit were desirable. I then suggested that I should ring up the Foreign

Office again at 11.30 when the answer ought to have arrived. I would then be told whether a meeting could take place.

I went back to Goering and told him of London's decision, which obviously annoyed him greatly. All I could do was to propose that he should telephone Hitler and see to it that the answer to the British note was couched in a conciliatory key and was of a sufficiently definitive nature so that the trip could materialise. He asked me to leave the coach and simultaneously requested to be put through to Hitler. I stepped out of the train and walked to and fro for a few minutes alongside. The tension was indescribable. Suddenly I saw Goering emerge from the train. He sat down at a large collapsible table under some beech trees beside the train. I went up to him and he said that he had already ordered a plane which was to stand ready at an airfield in the neighbourhood. He did not mention what Hitler had said, but he could not hide his disappointment that the trip could not take place before 11 o'clock. He talked at random about the chances of a settlement.

Here was the nation's second leader sitting at a headquarters of the German Air Force near Potsdam, in agony at what might happen, and obviously utterly unable to exert any influence on the contents of the written reply to Great Britain's ultimatum, the most vital communication that had ever been made in the whole of German history. My blood boiled as I saw the hopelessness of this powerful man, and I could not understand why, knowing what he did, he did not jump into his car, drive up to the Chancellery and tell them what he really thought—always supposing he really meant all the things he had been telling me for the past two months. Was it really possible that a man who, through a caprice of fate, had obtained such power and position, could be so completely in the hands of a crazy individual as now seemed to be the case, or was he playing a double game? He looked depressed and worried. He said a word now and again, as though to conceal his thoughts, expressing his surprise over the inexplicable British behaviour. At 11.15 some senior officers arrived and asked for an interview, so

I left them; but I had not gone more than fifty paces when Goering called me back and showed me a message which Körner had just given him. It said that Chamberlain had made an announcement on the wireless shortly after 11 o'clock, saying that Great Britain was at war with Germany, since Germany had not answered her note before that time.

And so the last attempt to avert a world war had failed.

Goering received the message with unconcealed vexation. Naturally it took the expression of accusations against England for thus showing that she did not wish to come to any understanding with Germany.

Now when the die was cast and the decision made, Hitler rang up at 11.30 and asked Goering to come at once to the Chancellery. At 11.45 he went in to meet Hitler and at about the same time I went to the British Embassy where I saw Forbes, who told me that no answer had arrived by 11 o'clock. Not until 11.20 did Ribbentrop telephone Henderson to ask him to come and fetch the note. In his memoirs, Henderson told how he called on Ribbentrop for the last time at 11.30. At that time I did not quite grasp how he got the note, but in a talk with Henderson a little later, he explained that its contents were so negative and its composition such that it could not give any chance of a peaceful settlement.

It was natural that Henderson could not hide his profound grief and disappointment. For years he had made it his chief task to try to bring about an understanding between England and Germany. To this end he had expended all his strength and ability, with such energy that certain circles in England regarded him with scepticism and considered him susceptible to Nazi influence. I cannot judge whether this mistrust was to any extent justified, or whether it was merely the outcome of irresponsible propaganda, but I can affirm with a clear conscience that during my collaboration with him I never found him the dupe of German policy, nor did he for one single moment relax in his efforts to safeguard Britain's interests.

After my final conversation with Henderson I sought out

Forbes again. I found him at the Adlon where the Embassy staff had been ordered to assemble and where they were practically treated as prisoners. He told me that as soon as it was possible the staff would be allowed to return to England by special train *via* Holland. Neither of us could conceal his excessive disappointment that our attempts to stem the catastrophe had met with so little success. We expressed the hope that we should be able to keep in touch with each other, although we both realised that the war which had now begun would most probably be long and ruthless and far more destructive than the former one.

So ended our last discussion and our collaboration in Berlin.

After lunching with Wettermark at the Esplanade I called upon Richert at 4 o'clock. He was kind enough to arrange with the Danish minister, Zahle, that I should be landed in Copenhagen by air, if necessary, aeroplanes being now forbidden to land in Sweden. I said good-bye to Richert after we had discussed again our experiences of the past fateful weeks. Richert had an exhaustive knowledge of conditions in Germany and did not believe that the Nazi régime had much chance of leading Germany to victory.

On my return to Sweden early in September, 1939, I wrote down the facts about the negotiations and added a few lines about my farewell with Richert, saying that Sweden could be thankful that he was her minister in Berlin. He was aware of his responsibility and firmly resolved, whatever might happen, to follow a definite and honourable Swedish course of action.

At 6.30 Körner paid an official visit to the Esplanade to thank me on behalf of the German government for what I had tried to do. He laid special stress on Germany's hope that peaceful relations would be maintained between Germany and Sweden, and said that he had been particularly empowered to declare that Germany genuinely desired to do everything to prevent any complications. The German government desired to keep up normal trade communications with Sweden, and to my surprise he ended up by saying that

Germany was entirely at Sweden's disposition for negotiations if the latter country wished to enter into a trade agreement with Russia.

On Monday morning, 4th September, Körner asked me to go to Goering's headquarters. Here I first saw General-Colonel Milch, who described the war on the Polish front, and soon afterwards Goering arrived. He impressed upon me that whatever might happen all his efforts and those of the German government would be directed towards making the war as humane as possible. He emphatically declared that the war with Poland would not last long and within a month Poland would be in German hands. However, one must take into consideration that Russia would occupy the north-eastern territories and Wilna would most probably be returned to Lithuania.

Under no circumstances would Germany begin hostilities against the Western Powers, but if they tried to bomb open German towns they would be answered in kind. He ended by expressing his hope that a chance would present itself to explain to the adversary that a war, which according to him had been forced upon Germany, ought to be concluded as soon as possible and a world war ought to be avoided. But if the Western Powers, after the conquest of Poland, tried to continue a war with Germany, then Germany would show them that she was strong enough successfully to defend herself. Goering's observations proved that thorough military preparations had been made for a rapid conquest of Poland. His commentaries on the Western Powers also made it clear that Hitler's plan was to crush the Polish army before the Western Powers had completed their preparations, thereby confronting Great Britain and France with a *fait accompli* which would compel them to lay down their arms. It was an attempt to repeat the policy which had been successfully employed several times before, but there was one important difference: this time Hitler had not been able to force his demands, but had been compelled to go to war. In order to get his own way he had had to let the German army attack a smaller free nation.

Goering was eager in his belief that the war would not last long, and he became very garrulous. Time went on and I realised that it would be difficult for me to get to Stettiner Bahnhof in time for the 9.45 train to Sweden.

I made a hasty farewell, jumped into a waiting car and drove to Stettiner Bahnhof. That same night I arrived at Trelleborg and stood once more on Swedish soil.

THE END